V.3 Nov 16 Gp

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Contributions by **Christine Jope-Slade, Ethel Levey, Jessie Pope, The Rev. F. W. Gillingham, William Le Queux, Etc.**

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November

ROYAL

6D

Maga

Miss Mabel Funston gives prizes to Soldiers & Sailors

see page 66.

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EVERY LITTLE HELPS

BUT THERE ARE NO LITTLE HELPS
THAT HELP LIKE
BEECHAM'S PILLS.

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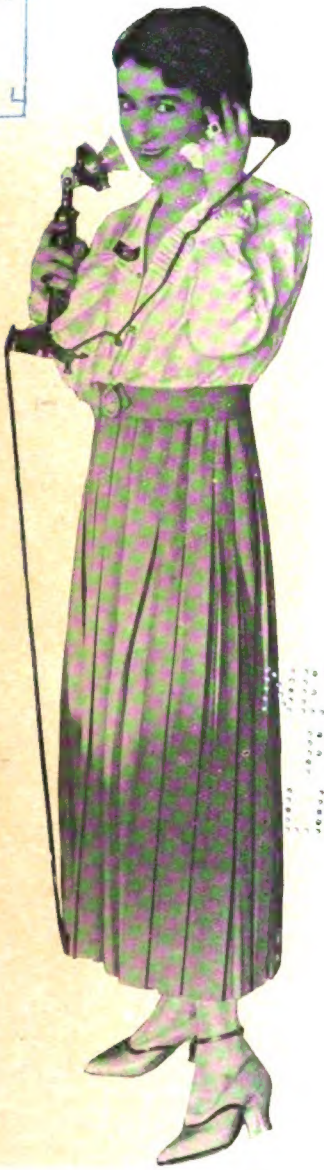

Photo Central News.

"Hullo! Yes, this is Ethel Levey speaking! An article in the ROYAL? Yes, on page 3. 'Clothes *v.* Conscience.' I hope you'll like the pictures. Goodbye!"

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Photo *Foulsham & Banfield.*

Miss Ethel Levey, in one of the striking costumes specially designed for her appearance in *Look Who's Here!* at the London Opera House.

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CLOTHES v. CONSCIENCE

Photo Central News.
In her home life Miss Levey clings to a simple style of dress—

By Ethel Levey.

"Should women buy new clothes in war time?" In the following article Miss Ethel Levey, the famous revue actress, contends that they should, and advances some very sound and striking reasons for her opinion.

Are we drifting back to prehistoric raiment?

Really, if the skirt-wearing, clothes-buying population of England suddenly became possessed of conscience concerning clothes to the extent desired by many economists of the moment, we should surely find ourselves clad in woad and a solitary mantle of uncured animal fur. What else remains?

Photo Fonlsham & Cassfield.
—which is in striking contrast to her toilettes in the London Opera House revue.

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We are exhorted to exercise the strictest economy in clothes! We are implored to set free labour for other work! We are begged to spend for other purposes money that in pre-war times purchased clothes. In short, a gigantic appeal is being made to our consciences through clothes.

"You ought to be ashamed to wear this and that and the other!" we are told. "Doesn't your conscience prick you as you go out in that new gown? Don't you feel a guilty woman?"

Photo *Foulsham & Banfield.*

Miss Ethel Levey's stage costumes always strike an original note. Here is one of those she wore in *Watch Your Step* at the Empire.

Sirs, the answer is in the negative, and, from certain points of view, rightly so.

Consider it broad-mindedly. There is no real waste anywhere. The circulation of money in this country means work and success and prosperity to trade and dealers in trade. Cut off the supply in certain directions, and ruin remains behind for many innocent victims. Remember, the people who suffer are not those at the top of the tree, but the unknown workers to whom thirty-five shillings a week, or less, means daily bread—with very little butter.

It is absurd to say that all the workers released by a general abandonment of new clothes can find work elsewhere. Some of them can, perhaps fifty per cent. But the others—what is to become of them? Consider, also, the fact that the people who spend money on clothes to any great extent will not use that money for other purposes. If they give to the Government it is additional money they draw upon. What they would spend on clothes remains unspent; passive and useless, it waits till another day. And in the meantime workers starve. How about conscience then?

The woman who can afford to buy clothes should go on buying them, not recklessly, not needlessly, but just as much in the ordinary way as present conditions allow. She is helping

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the war in two directions, for she gives to the country on one side, while continuing to circulate her money where it is badly needed.

Only the other day a working girl came to see me at the theatre, asking if I could give her a little sewing to do.

"I was a blouse hand at a big modiste's," she told me, giving the name. "You used to buy dresses there and I've finished many dress-tops for you. The house is closed now; but you know that, of course."

I asked why she wasn't working at munitions or other war work. She smiled, so sadly.

"They won't have me," she said. "I'm not educated enough to be a clerk, and I'm not strong enough to do munition work or go into a Government clothes factory and work a heavy machine for long hours. But I'm a good worker, and times are very hard, though it isn't for want of trying that I don't get work."

There is a case that is being duplicated hundreds of times; for although war work is plentiful to a degree, it is not everyone who is physically or intellectually suited for it. Must those people go under because certain reformists are asking women to apply conscience to clothes?

Think of the men who are coming home after weeks or months, without the sight of a pretty face or figure! Give them as much prettiness and brightness as possible. Let them see becoming clothes, for men *do* notice what we wear, in spite of all arguments to the contrary. If he comes home on leave he will know at one glance if your frock is last year's or new.

Here's a story that proves it; it's a true story, and I know the people concerned. A certain "Big Pusher" came back on leave not long ago—his first leave for many months. There was a girl

Photo
Foulsham & Banfield.

"It is the duty of every woman to make the best of her appearance," says Miss Ethel Levey——

White, New York.

——a motto which she herself lives up to thoroughly, for this talented actress is one of the best-dressed women on the stage.

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he liked very much before he went away, and he hoped while he was home to ask her a very, very vital question. His first night back a quiet dinner party was arranged at home, and this girl arrived early.

After talking to her for a little while he began to wonder what was wrong — where and how she had changed so greatly. At last he said: "That seems a familiar frock you're wearing. Have I seen it before?"

She laughed and blushed as she said: "Oh, yes, it's one of last year's! I'm not buying new clothes now; they say it's so wicked to spend money on dress—just an extravagance, you know."

He looked rather surprised. "Is it? Well, of course, I'm no judge. I haven't seen much in the way of colour except mud and khaki and an occasional nurse's uniform for quite a number of months. And one of the things we think of out there is the way women are looking back here, in their frills and furbelows. Odd, I daresay, but it's the truth. Are most of you wearing last year's frocks?"

She was going to answer hesitatingly, when the door opened and in came a girl cousin. Now she wasn't really pretty, this cousin, but she was full of life and *joie de vivre*. Instead of exuding a perpetual atmosphere of "isn't-this-all-too-awful?" she literally radiated joy and joyousness, and she had her hair well dressed, while a new, *chic* little gown covered her pretty figure.

It wasn't an expensive frock, but it was new, and looked it. Consequently its wearer felt "new" and bright, while the girl in the old gown wore a martyred, subdued air to match her self-sacrifice in going without new clothes.

The "leave man" brightened marvellously. His eyes feasted on the radiant vision provided by that cousin.

"Jolly cheery girl, and smart, too!" was his inward comment. It was a pleasure to look at her and listen to her.

This, by the way, proves a curious but true fact, that dress influences the average woman to such an extent

Photo Foulsham & Banfield.

The present success of revues and musical plays is attributed by Miss Levey largely to the fact that they are still full of pretty girls in the gay frocks our fighting men so greatly appreciate.

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that she can sparkle in a new gown, though she is not really clever, while a far more brilliant sister wilts and droops in a dress of the day before yesterday. Don't ask me to explain it. There is no explanation save the fact that women are—women!

When the girl who hoped to marry the "leave man" heard him arranging lunch and a *matinée* with the radiant cousin she wondered why. And she continued to wonder why he had so little time to spare for her during his leave days, and why he finally departed to the regions of mud and khaki and the Big Push without having spoken the vital words or evinced the slightest wish to do so. A picture of the radiant cousin, in a gown he mentally describes as "topping," decorates the walls of his dug-out now, while the inner flap of his pocket-book covers a similar face.

How is it that revues and musical plays are doing so wonderfully well these days? Just because they are full of gay girls, in gay gowns—full of splashes of colour and masses of movement—something to brighten the hearts of men who are off to face the grimmest things known to humanity; and some of them will never come back, remember! Suppose theatrical managers allowed conscience to arrange the dressing of a new revue—to the extent that nothing fresh was used, but just a string of "done-ups." Only suppose such a fearful thing! Why, half the attraction of the show would vanish.

On the contrary, managers are very wise. In spite of enormous

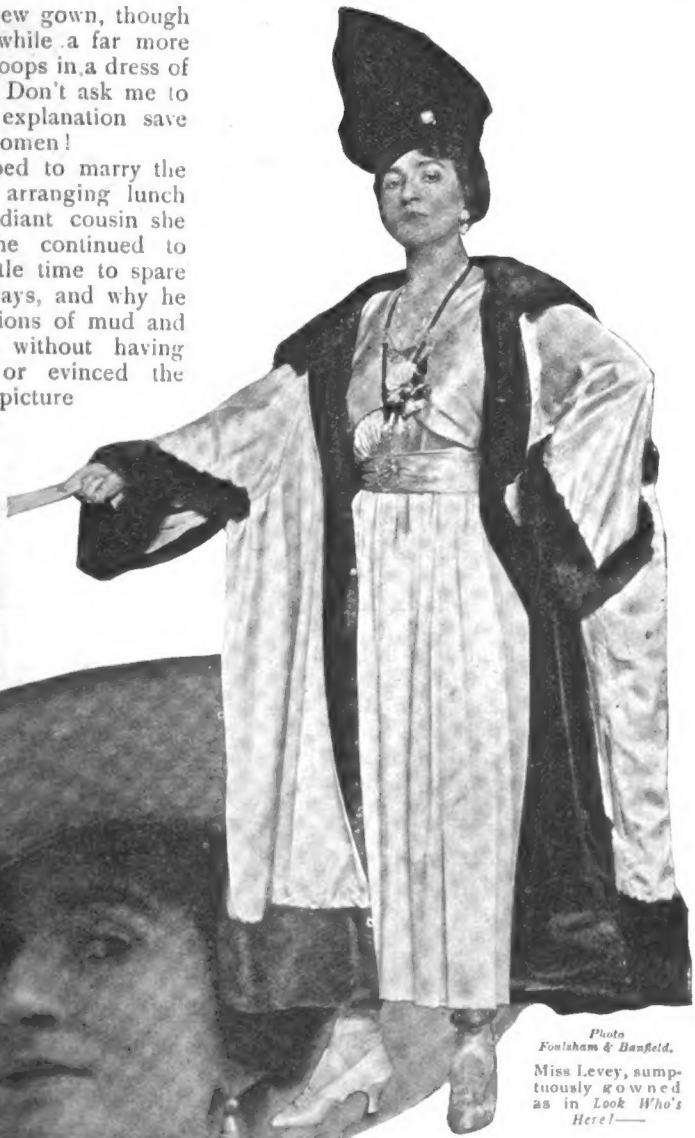

Photo Foulsham & Banfield.

Miss Levey, sumptuously gowned as in *Look Who's Here!*—

Photo H. & W. Abley.

—and as she appears in a new and characteristic photograph for which she has a great affection.

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difficulties in obtaining stuffs and dyes and labour, they are dressing plays as well as possible, giving work where it is needed, encouraging English labour in fields where foreign productions previously held sway. And they are rewarded for all their anxiety and enterprise — as they deserve to be.

In London it seems to me that prices are wonderfully moderate still, considering the great difficulties confronting manufacturers. So, in face of the fact that dress-providers of all grades are striving loyally to encourage English industry in this respect, surely it is up to the women of England to let their conscience-motto in clothes be "Carry on?"

Don't rob anyone; don't defraud yourself or other people. But remember that workers must live, and that our fighting men need gaiety and prettiness at home. A loyal effort is being made by drapers and costumiers everywhere. Help them to the moderate extent in your power, and you cannot be doing wrong.

Personally, I find it so hard to take a keen interest in clothes during these tragic days. But on the stage I am trying to dress as usual, because it seems necessary. In private life it is difficult to work up sufficient interest to spend hours planning clothes, and I hope that is a thing no woman is doing now that time is so exceedingly precious.

Still, gowns must be bought and worn, so let them be as simple as possible, and let the work connected with them go to the people who need it most. That is the plan I am trying to follow, and I hope it may not be considered a bad one, for it is the result of conscience applied to clothes.

Miss Levey in street attire, and as she loves to dress when at her country home, where the two rural snapshots were taken with the actress' own camera.

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AN UNREPORTED EPISODE

By John S. Margerison.

"Adown the stricken capes no flare—
No mark on spit or bar—
Girdled and desperate we dare
The blindfold game of war."

When Lieutenant James Carew, commanding H.M. Submarine "M 39," brought his craft to the surface alongside an apparently Dutch trawler somewhere in the North Sea, and jammed the muzzle of his four-inch gun against her rusty side as a measure of precaution, he never calculated on anything more than the usual inspection of her papers and the comparison of them with her cargo and general appearance, which was an everyday occurrence in his *rôle* of patrol vessel—a unit in the great blockade which was constricting the enemy's food and munition supplies. Therefore, when the larger part of her crew attempted to lower the boats on the side furthest away from him, and the remainder endeavoured to hide in all sorts of places, he was astonished, then amused, and, finally, he became cynical.

"This looks fishy, and smells fishy, too," he said, as he clambered from his own conning tower to her deck, followed by half-a-dozen of his crew. "Peaceful trawlers shouldn't get so panicky as this when a British warship pays 'em a call, unless they aren't what they seem. Let's investigate."

He strode forward to the bridge, but a quick glance round revealed nothing. Then he dived into the charthouse, and from beneath a settee hauled out a rotund figure who, from his dress, Carew took to be the Captain of the trawler.

"I'd like a word with you, sonny," said James, "if it isn't trespassing on your time too much."

"Vot you vant?" returned the empurpled skipper. "Ve are un peaceful fisher-boat und you haf no peezniss mit uns."

"That," said James serenely, "remains to be proved. Let's have a look at your papers."

The rotund one turned and raised a locker lid, which he held in such a way that Carew could not see what he was diving amongst.

"I really hope you don't mind," remarked James, rapping the skipper's knuckles smartly as he spoke, "but I'm possessed of an overwhelming curiosity to know what you're doing. If I can't keep an eye on you there's no telling but that you might fish a gun out and pay me off before I could stop you, and that wouldn't suit me at all."

The man looked murderously at the dapper Lieutenant for a second, and James braced himself for a fight. The appearance of a bluejacket at the charthouse door eased matters, however, and without further ado James proceeded to investigate the locker's contents himself.

"Hullo! What's this?" he exclaimed, holding up something which was obviously a chart. Moreover, it bore a label, which, in German, said: "Plan of the Elbe Minefields, Imperial Admiralty, 1916," in quite unmistakable characters. "When did the German Navy give neutral trawlers permission to go down the Elbe and dodge the mines? I think I'd better take charge of this, and you, Mulligan, had better take charge of the gentle Captain here. Don't hurt him; he may be valuable later on."

He stepped out on the bridge, leaving the Captain in the charthouse with his guard. A blast from a whistle brought two of his men running up.

"Just have a look round this hooker, Davis," he ordered, "and let me know what you find. I've got an idea she'll turn out a prize-packet."

They looked round; they harried the

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so-called "Dutch" crew—in a state of the bluest funk—with drawn revolvers into turning out every possible compartment they came across, and when they finally reported to Carew, the sum total of their discoveries was two score mines, without sinkers, and ready for dropping, a goodly supply of gasolene and petrol for the succour of needy submarines, and enough dried provisions to last a battleship three months.

"Mm!" remarked James, rubbing his chin. "And yet they say Germany's short of grub. Best thing we can do is to fill our own tanks from the store she's carrying, get enough grub into "M 39" to last us a few weeks, and then go and look for a destroyer who's got nothing to do. She might take this chap into port for us if we ask her nicely."

And so it fell out that two hours later a black patrol destroyer sighted what appeared to be a Dutch trawler under her own steam, manned by half-a-dozen British bluejackets, and shepherded by the rusty "M 39," whose four-inch gun pointed at her squat stern menacingly as if to spur her westwards. And, what is more, the destroyer, scenting a night in port, acceded willingly to Carew's request that she should convoy the prize into harbour, and there utilise to the best advantage the rich cargo this peaceful fisher-boat carried. James thanked the destroyer, reshipped his prize-crew, and went his way, quite forgetting, however, to hand over the chart with the prize. And also, for his own purposes, he retained the skipper.

Next morning, when the Senior Submarine Officer in the North Sea collated the reports of his outlying boats, there was neither sound nor word from "M 39," whereat the S.S.O. ground his best teeth and swore he'd scrag Lieutenant Carew for the omission. But Carew, with his two dozen hands—twenty-four hard cases, selected for their super-recklessness out of an essentially dare-devil crowd—was miles beyond the reach of any worrying S.S.O.'s. As Jimmy himself put it, they were on "special service."

As a matter of fact, "M 39" was, at that precise second, carefully nosing her way between the pair of islands that form the outer bulwark of the mouth of the river Elbe, and, under the guidance of the skipper, whose memory for these waters was prompted by Carew's revolver, and whose steering was most carefully checked by a petty officer on the excellent chart of the minefields "M 39" had captured, doing her best to avoid running aground on the Gelb Sand.

It was fairly dangerous going here, for on the one hand the bank shelved sharply upwards, while on the other side twenty feet of water—strewn thickly with mines—offered a quick passage across the Styx to an interloper without a chart. The skipper, however, being exceedingly fond of his own life, and being promised his freedom if the trip was a success, and sudden and certain death if it was a failure, proved a most efficient pilot, and guided "M 39" into the deepest part of the channel—a position which the chart showed to be clear of mines, save for a few which could only be fired from the shore.

And so, hugging the bottom as closely as he dared, and praying that no untoward incident might mar his trip, James took "M 39" down the sacred German river until she was within ten miles of the harbour of Cuxhaven, and at a spot where there were sixty feet of water in which to hide.

"This place was built for us from the beginning of things," remarked James. "We'll go to the bottom and lie there till darkness comes, unless some inhospitable blighter comes to dig us out, and when night falls we'll proceed. You ungodly beggars"—this to his crew—"if you know any prayers—which I much misdoubt—you had better get 'em off your chest; likewise those who feel sleepy had better catch the bird now; there'll be little time for naps or prayers when we proceed at dark. Call me at six." And with the skipper as a sleeping partner, with his revolver in his right hand and the wrist of his prisoner tied to his left, Carew rolled himself in a blanket and slept the sleep of the sailorman who has just done forty-eight hours on duty without a spell.

At six precisely the Chief Petty Officer roused him. James buried his face in a bucket of water and commenced preparations for the "big strafe," as he termed it. He cleared the vitiated air out of the boat, filled both his torpedo tubes with missiles set to run at ten feet deep, told off the crew for their several duties, and instructed them individually in what they were to do in case of any unexpected developments. Then he took his seat at the periscope, motioned the skipper to take the wheel, ordered "Slow ahead—eight knots," and told the helmsman that the first sign of anything untoward occurring would be the signal for his immediate dissolution.

"M 39" rose cautiously till her periscope was six inches above water, and James blessed the fact that a slight lop on the surface hid any track it made. The sky was black and velvety, with stars twinkling encouragingly here and there, but with no sign of a moon. And then, as "M 39" nosed her way southwards, there appeared one star bigger than the rest and moving

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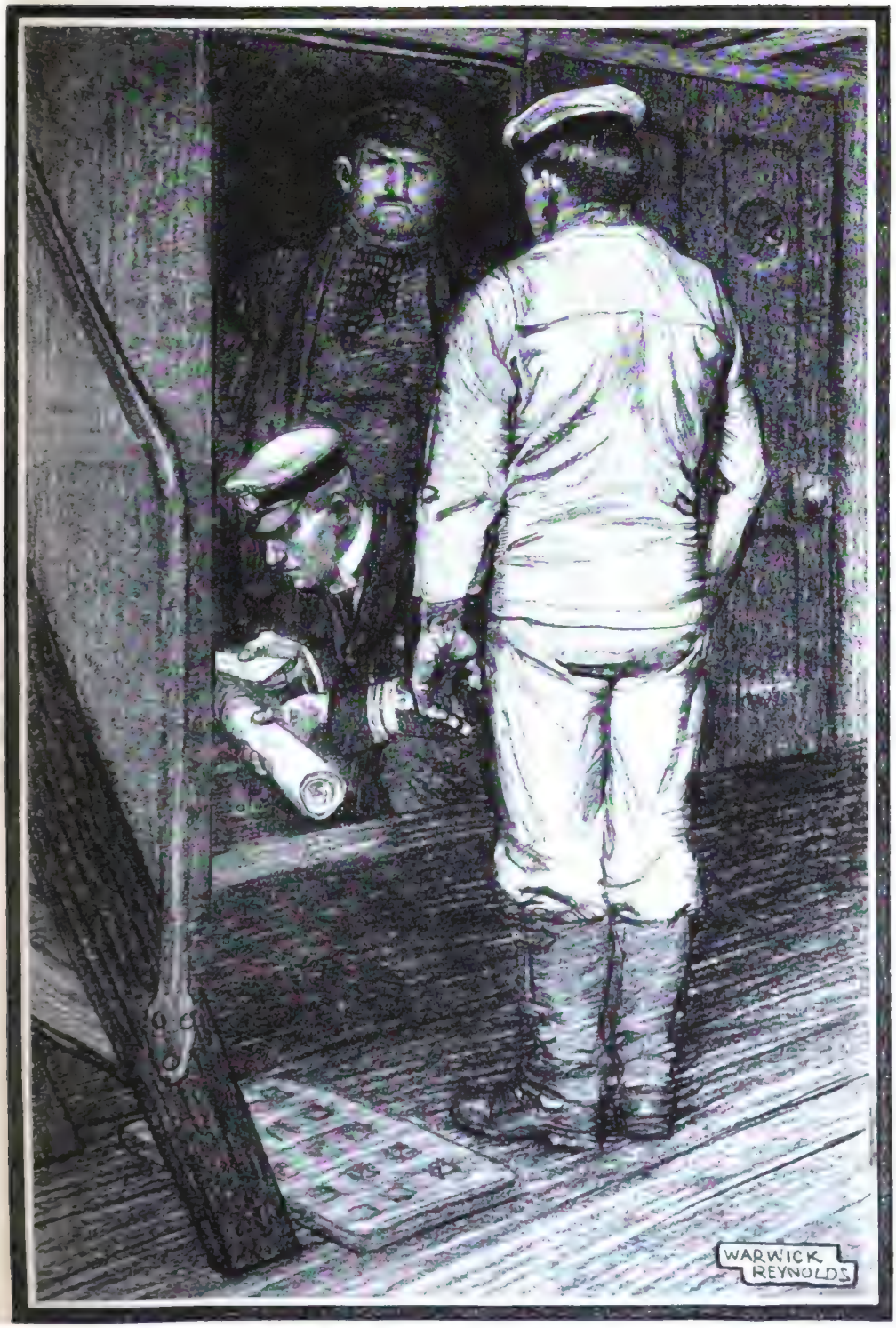

The appearance of a bluejacket at the charthouse door eased matters, however, and without further ado James proceeded to investigate the locker's contents himself. [*Page 9, col. 2.*]

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towards the periscope. James knew it quite well; it was the masthead light of a patrol destroyer.

"Fifty feet will clear that," he said aloud, as if to himself, and immediately the deck slanted downwards as the boat dived obliquely to the depth named, while the destroyer's keel cut clean through the place her periscope had but lately vacated.

"Surface peeps aren't exactly healthy here," was Jimmy's comment. "We'll push on blind, I think."

He watched the skipper narrowly, as, steering by compass and chart, he put the wheel over this way and that, guiding the boat on her tortuous path southward. Past Cuxhaven—home of destroyers and small craft—she sped, and just at midnight ran high and dry on the tail of the Kratz Sand, halfway down the river.

"Not mein fault, Herr," said the man pleadingly, as he saw James' eyes light up savagely. "The compass, she is a leetle out of alignment, I think."

"Perhaps," snapped Carew. "We'll see."

He ordered the motors to go full speed ahead, and, after what seemed hours, "M 39" slid forward bumpingly, stopped, slithered on again, and then fell, like a stone, clean over the edge of the shoal into deep water, her downward rush being only checked by the swift release of compressed air. Then she rose again, until, glancing through the periscope idly, James gave a yell.

"Holy Moses!" he cried, "we're on top. Down you go, lads."

Even as he spoke half a hundred search-lights leapt into life from the shore, hovered a moment, and then commenced to sweep the waters and the sky. The periscope dipped under the surface not an instant too soon, and just as one beam slowly traversed the river.

Dawn found them off the mouth of the Oste River, almost opposite Brunsbuttel, and here James took another surface peep. He glimpsed a hasting aeroplane, and sent "M 39" headlong to the mud of the river bed, there to lie, blind and in hiding, until the aerial danger had passed. Half-an-hour later Carew took another look, and this time he actually thought his end had come.

"Down again!" he yelled, and once more the salt water hissed into the ballast tanks. Carew mopped his brow.

"I'm not blaming you, Mynheer," he said, "but if there's much more of this dodging up and down like an express lift I shall grow old suddenly. The whole German Navy's evidently looking for us—we've just dodged a plane, and here a thundering great battle-ship is trying to ram us. Hope she didn't see the periscope, that's all."

James pushed on under water again, at times hitting the bottom, and every now and then taking a peep at the world above water. Once more he had to sink quickly, as a destroyer flotilla tore up the river, and just as the crew were taking heart of grace once more, there came to their ears the most uncanny of sounds. Starting at the bows and moving along the ship's side till it came abreast the control, came a strange scraping, screaming noise, as of steel against steel; it sent the blood to every man's heart. All knew what it was; even the pilot, who was paler than the rest.

"*Mein Gott!*" he screamed. "Mines!"

"Yes, sonny," said James; "it's a mine right enough, and if you don't waggle that wheel mighty quick it might go off."

The skipper needed no further prompting; he spun the wheel over and cut "M 39" off from connection with that stray mine as swift as thought, and almost bumped her straight into another thick cluster. Finally he regained his proper position in the channel, and, with periscope just awash, "M 39" turned into Brunsbuttel Harbour.

"Jumping Jimmy!" cried Carew, "our luck's in. There's a submarine flotilla at exercises out here, scattered all over the show, and we can lie and have a nice look round at the scenery without anyone suspecting us. Keep an eye on the wheel, though," he added, "and one of you chaps had better take it for the time being and give Mynheer a spell. I may want it moved pretty smartly if any "U" boat comes this way."

But no "U" boat came "M 39's" way for a time, and James was able to glean quite a lot of useful information both as to their construction and armament—they were new boats doing trials—and of the lay of the land. He noted four battleships and eight large cruisers lying in Brunsbuttel Harbour, and up the Kiel Canal itself—barred by big lock-gates—the masts and funnels of a host of ships. Then, on the appearance of a couple of Zeppelins cruising slowly over the harbour, he deemed it wisest to sink from sight and wait till nightfall before attacking.

All things must have an end; "M 39's" wait for darkness was no exception. At nine precisely she started to rise in order to reconnoitre the surface. At forty feet something seemed to check her ascent, and although he emptied almost all his ballast tanks, Carew could not bring her to the surface.

"Get on the bottom," he ordered, "and get out the diving dresses. I'll go and have a look at the new anchor we seem to have grown."

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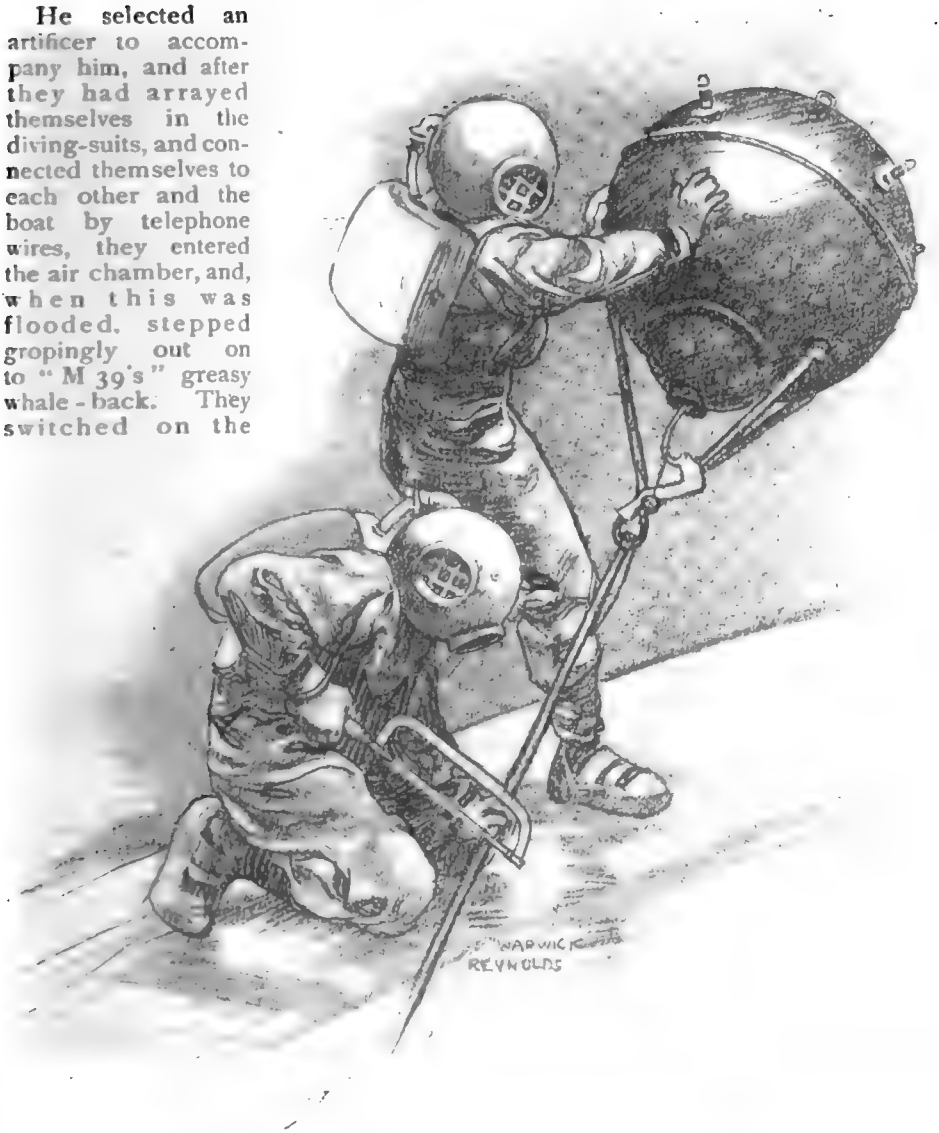
He selected an artificer to accompany him, and after they had arrayed themselves in the diving-suits, and connected themselves to each other and the boat by telephone wires, they entered the air chamber, and, when this was flooded, stepped gropingly out on to "M 39's" greasy whale-back. They switched on the



"Just keep the mine from bumping a second, sir," suggested the artificer, "while I saw through the cable with this." . . . Soon the teeth of the saw were hacking merrily through the strands.

electric lights on top of their helmets, and slithered and sprawled aft till they came to the horizontal rudders. There, securely jammed between rudder and hull, was the thick wire cable of a mine, whose round black shape bobbed within three feet of the boat, its strikers protruding at several points, waiting only for a slight blow to send boat, mine, and men in a shower of spray and splinters.

"Pretty thing to have as a pet," said James into the telephone mouthpiece. "What are we going to do?"

"Just keep the mine from bumping a second, sir," suggested the artificer, "while I saw through the cable with this. I brought it along in case."

"This" was a hacksaw, and showed the artificer's forethought. Hammer and chisel would never have cut the wire at that depth; no force could have been got into the blows. Soon the teeth of the saw were hacking merrily through the strands, and suddenly the mine floated upwards, leaving James suspended in mid-water as the wire parted. A touch on his valve brought him back to the whaleback, however, and the sinker was cut away in the same manner. Then the

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hydroplanes were moved and wriggled until they were clear, and the intrepid two clambered inboard once more.

Carew relieved the skipper at the wheel as "M 39" slowly gathered way, and came at last within torpedo range of the first cruiser in the line.

"Stand by the tubes," ordered James. "Fire every time my hand drops, and for heaven's sake don't have any waiting between rounds. We'll cruise down the line at four knots, and bump one torpedo off at each ship as we pass."

Slowly "M 39" turned and started her run. Carew's hand was upraised.

"FIRE!" he yelled as he dropped it.

There was a faint hiss as the torpedo left the tube, the gurgle of water, and then the lower tube stood by while they launched another missile in the upper one. Again James' hand dropped, again, and again, and the torpedoes slid home truly and well. James had a sight of eight mighty columns of water rising in quick succession, of eight vivid, blood-red flames rising to heaven as the torpedoes struck their targets. Only two rounds missed.

Thereafter "M 39" sank to the harbour bottom like a stone, and her men slapped each other on the backs when Carew told them the result of their shooting. Then they slept, woke, and slept again, till three whole days had gone past; till the Germans had scoured every inch of the Elbe and every inch of sky above it, seeking to locate with sea and aircraft the submarine who had thus entered the Eagle's Eyrie and clipped his talons. They even exploded every mine along the river, and incidentally strafed a couple of their own submarines, who were also looking for "M 39," but all to no purpose.

And at the end of the week—the full week from the capture of the trawler—James Carew ran up his wireless mast on his particular beat in the North Sea, and reported to the Senior Submarine Officer that he was on duty. Had the S.S.O. held his tongue and waited till Carew could see him he might not have acted so rashly. As it was he grew purple, swore loudly, and finally ordered Carew and his twenty-five—including the pilot, who was now something of a white elephant—into port, there to await court-martial, with sundry pains and penalties.

* * * *

The President of the court-martial rose grandiloquently, with a clank of his sword scabbard and a twinkle in his eye.

"Lieutenant Carew," he said curtly, "the Court finds you guilty of leaving your post of duty in time of war, of absenting yourself from your flotilla without leave, of endangering the material and personnel of one of his Majesty's vessels of war. The sentence of this Court, without fear, favour, bias, or prejudice, is that you be dismissed your ship, and severely reprimanded. Carry on."

Dazed, Lieutenant James Carew drew himself up, saluted the Court, and turned on his heel towards the door. Then the President spoke again.

"*Commander* Carew," he called.

James stopped. "Did you call *me*, sir?" he queried wearily.

The President doffed his cocked hat, and stepped round the table. Then he held out his hand.

"I did, *Commander* Carew," he said. "The regulations being satisfied by the Court, I am instructed by his Majesty to hand you this commission as a Commander in his Navy, to inform you that you are appointed to the command of the 12th Submarine Flotilla in a brand-new boat, and finally to instruct you to present yourself at Buckingham Palace on the 30th instant for decoration. His Majesty himself has expressed a desire to see the—the—the hair-brained naval officer who took a submarine through the Elbe minefields, and strafed eight enemy cruisers and battleships."

James gasped, gazed at the members of the Court, who, forgetting their dignity, crowded round with congratulations, and fled, straight into the arms of his crew, who, each bearing on his breast the Distinguished Service Medal, besought him earnestly to take them with him to his new ship. This James promised to do.

"But," he said, "what about the skipper?"

"Beggin' your pardon, sor," replied Able-Seaman Mulligan, "I knew you promised to let him go if we came through it safe, so I gave 'im 'is fare to America yesterday, and found a stray passport for him. I suppose by this time 'e's well on his way across the Atlantic—the boat sailed ten minutes after I got him aboard."

And then—only then—did James Carew's cup of joy run over.

TO SOLDIERS AND SAILORS!
If you want to win a delightful prize turn to page 66, where you will find particulars of a new and fascinating competition.

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THE LAST OF THE SLAVEYS

By JESSIE POPE

"They also serve who only stand and wait," someone said somewhere, and the words have often been interpreted literally by the domestics in many a household. Now that the "skivvy" is dying out, Miss Jessie Pope has enshrined, with loving care, the salient characteristics of the genus in these pages, a task which will earn her the thanks both of this generation and those to come.—Ed. R.M.

THERE is always something pathetic about a dying race, something which inspires pity and even affection, however unworthy we may have felt it to be when, in its zenith, it proved a powerful and disturbing element in our lives.

So it is with the race of domestic servants, rapidly expiring in our midst—the Marys and Sarahs, the Janes and Emmas, who have struck their death knell, and, by abandoning their old careers, have provided their mistresses with a new one—that of being their own slaveys.

The old order changeth, and changeth remarkably quickly nowadays. For some years the servant problem has been growing daily more difficult, and now the war has absolutely put the lid on. Cooks are conducting tram-cars, parlourmaids are making munitions, and "tweenies" collecting tickets, and good luck to them all. It's no earthly use trying to stop the tide; the more sensible plan is to pull ourselves together and swim with it.

After all, the connection between mistress and maid has never been a great success, and there have been faults on both sides. Of course, there are cases we read of in the papers of maids rewarded by handsome legacies for long and faithful service, but these are the exceptions that prove this rule that when mistresses foregather over afternoon tea in each other's drawing-rooms, maids come under discussion as "necessary nuisances," while the mistress almost invariably figures as "she" in kitchen conversation.

But before the cap and apron brigade disappear entirely from our midst it might be interesting to review a few of the many and varied types of that long procession which has passed before the harassed eyes of the anxious housewife.

Well to the front, comes the ultra-refined, rather languid young person, who *once* "obliged" a lady of title, and don't you forget it! Not that she is likely to let you! She is rather aristocratic in her manner and mincing in her speech, though her aspirates

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have a nasty knack of getting mixed up. In one place her name was Ellen—at least her mistress was not quite sure of the point, and one day tried to unravel the mystery.

"I'm never quite sure," she said, "how you spell your name. Your friends call you Helen, but so far I've called you Ellen. Is it 'Helen' with an 'h,' or 'Ellen' with an 'e'?"

"Oh, no, madam," replied the mincer condescendingly; "it is *H*elen with an 'he'."

It was another young person of the same type, named Florence, who introduced her mistress to a new brand of tinned peas—"like we used to 'ave at 'er Ladyship's."

"And you see, madam," she remarked to her latest suburban mistress, "the instructions is that you must 'eat the contents before opening the tin."

"But surely," replied her mistress with a puzzled smile, "that must be rather difficult?"

Florence bridled, and jerked up her chin.

"I should say *h*eat, madam," she replied in a voice of injured rebuke.

Council School education is responsible for taking a good deal of unconscious humour out of servants' letters—those extraordinary and sometimes inexplicable effusions composed by the slavey of past years, as, seated at the kitchen table, she floundered perspiringly through the mysteries of grammar and spelling. Now, applications for a situation (if any) are short and concise, and a little masterful in tone. But it was not so very long ago that a friend of mine received the following remarkable document from a country girl:

DERE MADMAN

I ham not strong but I ope I shall shoot you

Your truelly
ELIZA STOVER.

And it was the candid confession of weakness in the first part of the letter rather than the suggestion of physical violence in the second that terminated the negotiations.

Oh, those country girls! How many a distracted mistress has seen a star of hope rising on her desolate horizon in the shape of a real hard-working country girl. She arrives, neatly dressed and bonny; willing and good tempered, she makes the work fly, looks quite presentable in the afternoons, and scrubs floors and tables until—to use one of her country phrases—they are "white as a hound's tooth." Then the inevitable happens.

Florence was one of the mincing, ultra-refined type of maids, and very touchy on the subject of aspirates, any criticism of which she met with an air of injured rebuke.

She grows homesick. Far away from kith and kin, the hefty young Amazon begins to mope. Great, big country tears course down her plump red cheeks. She has never left her "mammy" before, and it's a fatal case of "I want to be in Dixie."

Coaxing, persuasion, trips into London, high living, even threatening

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letters from the "mammy" herself, fail to stem the lugubrious torrent of her misery, and back she goes at length, carriage paid, while her thwarted and despairing mistress once more turns her steps to the registry office.

Her opposite is the quick-witted, sharp-eyed, town-bred specimen, who also makes the work fly, in her own fashion; who hides her dirty cloths and dusters under the sink to save washing, and who has no time to take up the little heaps of dirt she sweeps into the corners, but plenty to spend at the gate with one o other of her best boys. Early rising is her bugbear and picture palaces are her delight. She is very human and fond of frivolity; her facility for back-answers usually results in a month's notice, and she frequently goes in rather a hurry before the time is up.

The quick-witted, town-bred servant has a great taste for frivolity, and adores picture palaces as much as she loathes early rising.

Sharp as a needle, she knows more about her master's and mistress' affairs than they do themselves—and what she doesn't know she generally guesses—which reminds one of the good old story of the housemaid who, when asked the question:

"Can you tell me anything of your master's whereabouts?" replied promptly:

"Oh yes, ma'am; I think they've gone to the wash."

Some mistresses say that it is a test of a good house servant how often she shakes her duster out of a window when cleaning a room, but, sad as it may sound, it is frequently the slovenly non-shakers who are the sweetest tempered, and the scrupulously clean ones who "won't be spoken to." Of course, a great deal depends on how one speaks, and there lies the difficulty.

Satire is generally wasted; pleading soon loses its effect, and the quiet, calmly-considered rebuke hardly provides a satisfactory vent for habitual annoyances. But it is always inglorious to lose one's temper, though it is often done, and superiority is never proved by speaking to an inferior like a dog, however soothing to exasperated feelings it may be at the moment.

Country girls are not always the simple, guileless persons we hope to find them, though it *was* a country girl who informed her master, a collector of rare curios, that a gentleman had called to see him.

"Who is it—what is his name?" inquired her master, looking up from his book.

"I didn't think to ask, sir."

"Tut-tut——! Well, where is he?"

"I've showed him into the droring-room, sir," replied the maid, adding, with a sudden gleam of intelligence: "Please, sir, I think he's a tramp."

It was a Scotch girl from the wilds of Perthshire to whom her mistress said one afternoon:

"Well, Maggie, I've got a desperate headache, and I'm going to lie down. Do keep the house as quiet as possible."

"Ferry good, mum," replied Maggie.

"And remember, I'm not to be disturbed for anybody who may come—not even *the King*."

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Maggie bowed her head solemnly.

"And will I ask him to wait?" she inquired.

On the subject of ailments, who has not noticed how speedily the contagion of the family ailments travels to the kitchen? The microbe of rheumatism, toothache, sore-throat, and lassitude—particularly the last—flies like magic from mistress to maid, and, as the symptoms are apparently similar, it has been the cause of many a domestic cataclysm that the treatment should not also be identical.

The mistress, for instance, succumbs to a nervous headache and goes to bed. By the afternoon the maid's hand is straying momentarily to her fevered forehead, and in a voice of weary endurance she borrows a neuralgia tablet.

The daughter of the house develops a cold, and sits by the fire with a shawl and a hot-water bottle. With extraordinary rapidity the disease materialises in the kitchen, and the clanking barks, that drown even the clatter of crockery, make one wonder if it will be wise to eat the food.

Talking about crockery, there is one thing to be said about home life without servants—our food won't cost us more, and the crockery will have a longer life. Oh, those butter fingers below stairs! What pangs the resulting crashes from the scullery bring to the hearts of the ladies bending over their crochet patterns in the morning-room, and what a roaring trade is done by the local china shop!

But there is one advantage about these sudden crashes—they are, at least, candid and plain-spoken, and tell you the worst at once. It is those stealthy and silent breakages of cups and plates, a handle here, a spout there, that leave the china-cupboard mysteriously depleted—a depletion which, by the way, the maid is as unable to account for as the mistress.

And it is not only the china-cupboard that suffers; some maids are warranted to smash anything from a kitchen boiler to a flat-iron, and the curious part of the matter is that these smashers are often slender, delicate creatures, whose touch, to judge from their appearance, should be as light and delicate as a butterfly's kiss.

No doubt there is a funny side to it, if one can only take the proper point of view, but, as a rule, the mistress sighs more often than she smiles, and—in spite of the occasional gusts of explosive merriment in the nether regions—the sense of humour of the maid is none too subtle either. For instance, the other day my small nephew ran to his nurse with a flushed, tear-stained face full of righteous resentment:

"Is it fair, Nurse?" he cried, clutching at her skirts for sympathy. "Betty is going with Mummy, though it's *not* her turn, and I've got to go out again with beastly old *you!*"

Nurse never smiled; in fact, she seemed seriously annoyed.

But another maid of the same household must have possessed a sense of the ridiculous, though not too sensitive as to the rights of property. She was a clear-eyed, honest-looking young person, and speedily became popular, partly on that account and partly because of the beautiful flowers that reached her twice a week from her cottage home, and with which she insisted on adorning the dining-room.

Naturally, she did not lose by her generosity, and all went well, until at last, suspicions having been aroused and an inquiry instituted, she admitted with her habitual candour that she had made a practice of going out twice a week, "all in the morning early," and annexing the flowers from the adjoining public park.

Perhaps it is the sheer monotony of the daily round that brings out the slavey's worst points, for often in case of the sudden emergency of accident or illness she rises nobly to the occasion, and proves herself the stand-by of the family and a jewel of the first water. Nearly all women love excitement—I do myself—and I always think of the following incident with a throb of sympathy.

A cousin of mine advertised in a weekly paper for a housemaid, stating the usual requirements, number in family, etc., and adding the final *bonne-bouche*, "good home guaranteed." The first two insertions brought absolutely no replies, but in the final one a printer's error changed "good home guaranteed" to "good time guaranteed," and next morning there was a *queue* of candidates at the front door and an overflowing letter-box.

Much has been said in this article about the mistress of the house, but what about the master? Well, as a rule, his trenchant comment on domestic upheavals is "Sack the lot"; and when faced with the miseries of a maid-less *ménage*, he asserts that there would be no difficulty in getting good servants if *he* had the engaging of them.

One master of my acquaintance went so far as to carry his threat into execution. It is a curious story. He was a lugubrious person with real or fancied dyspepsia, and one morning he got out of bed the wrong side, refused to eat his breakfast, insisted on the cook being sacked there and then, and announced that he would engage a new one himself. His better half knew that her cook was a "treasure," but, ever obedient to her

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marriage vows, broke the news in the kitchen with tears in her eyes, paid the good-natured girl generously, and they parted with mutual regrets.

Later in the day the master visited the registry office, and being one of those taciturn, self-centred persons who rarely trouble to glance at their servants, met his late cook without recognising her, took a fancy to her neat, comely appearance and respectful manner, and engaged her on the spot. She re-entered his service the same evening, and five minutes' conversation in the kitchen enlightened her amazed but delighted mistress as to the position of affairs.

They kept their own counsel, the dinner was cooked and served to the dyspeptic's entire satisfaction; in fact, the "treasure" still retains her old position at increased wages, enthusiastically praised by a master who frequently asserts that the cook *he* discovered is the best in London, bar none.

In the days, fast approaching, when the tide of domestic service has left us high and dry on our own resources, we must remember that perhaps the chief reason the defunct slavey as a class did not give satisfaction was because it was a case of a square peg in a round hole nearly every time.

In the old days when there was only one vent for the wage-earning activity of a certain class of young women, they were pitchforked into "service," however badly Nature might have equipped them for the job. Now that a more patriotic uniform replaces the time-honoured cap and apron, let us hope and believe that their new tasks will suit them better.

As for the mistresses, the war has taught us that there is honour rather than shame in rolling up one's sleeves and soiling one's hands, and ladies who go daily to cook and scrub and wash up for the "Tommies," will find it excellent training for similar work in their own homes when the Germans cease from troubling and the nations are at rest.

THE LITTLE BROWN OWL.

A little brown owl once lived in a tree
  Afar in the forest that grew.
A bachelor fowl and lonely was he,
  For neighbours were scattered and few.
And so he determined to change his estate—
Said he: "I'll look out for a suitable mate;
For, as long as you're single, 'tis never too late
  To woo-oo! To woo-oo! To woo-oo!"

He hooted, in vain, till his voice nearly broke,
  The whole of a summer night through:
"I'm wanting a mate in my snug hollow oak!"
  And the brown owl felt awfully blue.
"A bachelor bird I must still be, I fear;
For nobody loves me, it's woefully clear!"
Just then came a voice as the dawning drew near:
  "I do-oo! I do-oo! I do-oo!"

Now the little brown owl has a neat little mate
  Of the same sober, sensible hue;
A happier fowl, with pleasure I state,
  Is not to be found—for, 'tis true,
Although you may fancy a bachelor den
A snug enough dwelling, nine times out of ten
You'll find it a thousand times comfier when
  You're two-oo! You're two-oo! You're two-oo!

Ada Leonora Harris.

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BROADBENT'S CRUCIBLE

By Josephine Underwood Munford.

"She walks in Beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes."

Marie Travers possessed the soft, helpless kind of beauty that is born to be waited on. Her profession in life was being waited on. It had always taken several men to pick up her fan, several more to open a cab door for her, and innumerable ones to help pass her Sunday afternoons.

After he married her, Robert Broadbent went on waiting on her as a matter of course. But it had surprised him to find that it still took as many men as before to while away her Sunday afternoons.

When the boy came he hoped with a mighty, silent hope that things were going to be different. But the boy himself required a constant waiting on, which was not in the least in Marie's line. Fortunately, there was Jacqueline. She waited on Marie and the boy as a matter of course.

Robert was thinking hard of these things, but silently, as was his wont, when his wife swept into the library, *chic* and girlish-looking in furs and velvet. From under a smart little toque her burnished hair curled alluringly about ears as dainty as if modelled in wax. A thin veil, with one coquettish flower placed carefully in the centre of the left cheek, softened the beauty of her almost too regular features. Over her arm there floated a long rose-pink motor veil. Her husband looked up, surprised at her out-of-door costume.

"Going out, Marie?"

The regular lines of his lean, well-cut face suggested a temperament equable enough, and kindly. But the fire of his deep-set, dark eyes bespoke a soul whose waters might be turbulent when once aroused.

"To be sure, you goose! Had you forgotten? It's the night of Dickie's moonlight motor party." She leant over and gave him a pecking little kiss on the forehead. "But, of course, you wouldn't remember such trivial things."

Robert's eyes did not accord with the smile on his lips. His fine face held something his wife had not seen before. He ran his fingers through his brown hair with the gesture of one who tries forcibly to push away an unwelcome idea.

"I don't remember hearing of it," he said, after a long minute. "An affair of Dick Langdon's, is it? Do you think you had better go?"

"Oh, if you are jealous——" His wife's voice touched the dangerous word gingerly, as a child pokes prankishly at a forbidden object to see what will happen. She gave an unreal laugh.

The ugly word surprised him. He was not jealous. It came over him with a little start that he was not. A year ago he might have been. But now he was not.

"I am not jealous," he said, with that careful sincerity which Marie sometimes found slow and rather trying. "I was thinking of you. You have been seen about a great deal with Dickie lately. Of course, he is only a boy, but the world's tongue wags, however slight the object."

"Let it wag, then!—though you needn't speak of him as if he were a nonentity!" His wife's eyes took on that baleful glitter which always warned him from the start that reasoning was useless.

Robert got up abruptly. He knew only too well the nothingness to which this type of argument always led.

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"Where are you going?" his wife asked him.

"Upstairs to have a look at the boy," he said in an altered tone.

"He's *quite* all right." Marie tapped the table impatiently, with her well-gloved little hand. "I know what you are hinting at. Now, listen, Robert. I'm tired of this nonsense about the boy. I brought him into the world, didn't I? I nursed him myself when many a mother wouldn't have been bothered." She looked at him as if worlds of sacrifice lay behind that act. "You insult me when you poke around after him as if his own mother neglected him. That cold's nothing. And he's asleep, anyway. And besides, Jacqueline's here."

"Yes," said Broadbent in an odd voice. "Jacqueline is here. Well — good-bye, Marie."

"Wait— there's the bell. Come back and speak to Dickie, at least, if you won't go. Please try to be agreeable for once."

The maid ushered in a breezy, pretty fellow with blonde hair, a debonair smile, and the irresponsible air of one who has not a care in the world.

"Ready, Marie?" he began, then hesitated as he saw her husband returning through the opposite door. "Oh—er—how are you, Mr. Broadbent? Not going with us?"

Broadbent bestowed on him the absent-minded attention one gives to a child or a poodle.

"Not to-night, thanks." He did not mention that no one had asked him to go. It occurred to him that they had a habit of taking his refusal for granted.

"Well! We'll be off, Mrs. Broadbent. The others are waiting in the car."

With perfunctory courtesy he went to the door with his wife and watched her and Dickie down the steps and into the motor. He felt strangely detached. These two good-looking beings on pleasure bent, the one a mother with her baby ill upstairs, seemed unreal puppets with nothing to do with real life—or with him.

It was odd, that last. Justice stepped in and reminded him that the boy was not really ill—only a heavy cold. And besides, Jacqueline was there. At that thought he changed his mind about going up to the nursery, turned, and walked resolutely back to the library. From a rack on the mantelpiece he took a well-coloured meerschaum pipe, the companion of many of his lonely hours. He filled and lighted it, and sat down before the fire.

Broadbent was not given to introspection. He saw things to do, did them, abided cheerfully by the result, be it good or bad. In most things hitherto results had been good. His business was pushing out, growing; good things were coming his way to be developed to the utmost for the boy. Yes, he abided by his results, good or bad. Marie was his wife. To him she had given the flower of her exquisite loveliness. What if each year that loveliness grew a little colder, a little harder, a little more selfish?

For this one night he faced the truth squarely. His love for Marie was dead. Again he repeated to himself the weary formula: He had married her, and that was all there was to it. He turned with grim resolution to the book he had been reading when his wife's advent interrupted him.

Magazines and books strewed the table in comfortable disorder. The fire blazed cosily in its blue-tiled fireplace, making the dark mahogany furniture give back a luxurious gleam from its polished surface. A shaded reading-lamp burnt at his elbow with homely companionship. Over the pretty room there brooded a soft, warm atmosphere of intimacy, of sweet private relations, of shut-in happiness and home. Yet the one of all the world who should have shared all this was motoring in the moonlight with feather-headed Dickie Langdon. And into Broadbent's heart there crept a cold sense of futility such as he had never known. His book lay unheeded on his knee, his eyes sought the fire. An inarticulate pain, that he could not or would not recognise, held him helpless in its grip.

The opening of the door aroused him. He looked back over his shoulder. A young woman stood on the threshold. She was tall, quite half a head taller than the miniature Marie, and her presence carried a restful sweetness hard to define. It spoke from the smiling, deep blue eyes which held a hint of wistfulness; from the gentle, broad brow, with its overshadowing waves of soft, dark hair; from the upward curves of the tender, patient mouth. Had she not been the sister of Marie, Jacqueline's beauty would not have passed unnoticed. But the sparkling *éclat* of the fair-haired beauty of her elder sister had so dominated everybody, including Jacqueline herself, that neither she nor others had paused to appreciate the deeper beauty that lay behind her own features.

Robert Broadbent realised something of this for the first time as she stepped into the room, closing the door quietly behind her.

"He's sleeping like a love." She smiled reminiscently. "He had some trouble with Pumbee Bear because he fell over and bumped Arabella's nose; so he wouldn't take him to bed with him. But he went off

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happily at last, clutching the slighted Arabella in his arms." She sat down on the other side of the fireplace.

Broadbent's quick smile met hers and he said, without meaning to, in a voice that held depths which surprised him: "Thank you, Auntie Jack."

The girl was startled at his tone. It sounded sad, somehow, and she could not bear Robert to be sad.

"What are you reading, Bob?"

"Heath on engineering. He's a clever chap."

"Yes, I read his bit about the Panama Canal. Not that I understood it. But it's awfully interesting."

Robert looked up in surprise.

"By Jove, that was nice of you! I always feel personally flattered when anyone takes an interest in engineering."

Jacqueline stared into the fire. She did not answer. In fact, she sat still for so long that Broadbent, who thought he had got accustomed to having this sweet, quiet presence beside him, who told himself that if she had been his own sister he could not have loved her more—which was probably true—felt an odd sense of embarrassment. Jacqueline was not given to creating atmospheres. Yet something impalpable had entered the room with her that night, something which disquieted him.

At last she spoke.

"I read most of—Mr. Heath's book. I did not understand it. But I read it." Her voice held a tremor utterly foreign to his previous knowledge of Jacqueline. "Bob, I'd like to speak to you about something, if you aren't too busy."

An utterly reasonless fear gripped him. What was wrong with him to-night? He could not understand himself.

"Never too busy to be at your service, Jack." But somehow the lightness he intended to put into his tone was missing. The words sounded serious, strained.

"Thank you, Bob. It's about—James Heath." Jacqueline hesitated. "He has asked me to marry him."

So this was it! Robert told himself that his cold shock was caused by surprise. Why had he never suspected it? Heath had often been to the house as his friend. Yet how quiet they had kept it! But Jacqueline was like that. She was nothing of a flirt, like—his will nipped that thought clean off at the bud.

"You are not displeased?"

"Displeased? Why should I be displeased, Jacqueline?" He spoke with studied indifference. "Heath is an excellent man. He will make a fine husband."

"Bob—*please!* Don't talk so—coldly. I want to talk to you, I want to tell you—oh, I know most girls tell their mothers such things, but I have no mother, and Marie—somehow she doesn't understand."

"No," repeated Robert with finality. "Marie wouldn't understand."

"So I *must* talk to you about it. I—oh, please try to understand!"

Her eyes shone, her cheeks were flushed. Her passive beauty became suddenly active, radiant.

Broadbent resented that glow that came to her for James Heath. The queerest sensation he had ever felt in his life gripped him. It made him tremble. So this girl, whom he had accepted into his home and made an integral part of it—God knew what a vital part of it she had become!—wanted him to play the woman's *rôle* and listen to her rhapsodies on the man who was to take her away from it! A sudden inexplicable rage possessed him. He mastered it by a violent effort of will.

"I can only tell you what I know about Heath." What he said came with an effort. What he wanted to say pulled behind it like dogs on a leash. "I—have your interest at heart. He is a most excellent fellow. I am sure there is nothing to be said against him."

"Except," said Jacqueline in a very low tone, "that I do not love him."

"What!"

At her word Broadbent's rage left him. He turned to her, amazed.

"Then why——"

"Listen. I will tell you. Then you will understand why—why I must talk about it—why I have asked you—to help me."

The girl clasped her hands over her knees and looked fixedly into the fire. Its ruddy light gleamed on her soft dark hair and exquisite profile, and her womanliness became more alluring, more delicately radiant. It gave a warmer tint to the rich blue of her dress which brought out to such advantage the surprising blue of her eyes—somehow you always felt Jacqueline to be a thorough brunette, and it startled you when those intensely blue eyes looked out at you from the black fringe of heavy lashes. She began to speak in a dreamy tone, almost as if to herself.

"When I was a little, little girl," she said dreamily, her eyes still fixed on the fire, "I used to dream, like every other little girl since the beginning of time, about the Prince who would some day come to love me. I never doubted. I was sure, *sure* he would come. And as I grew to ten, to fifteen, then to twenty, I still believed. At twenty all is

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not so fatuous and golden as other people pretend. Big doubts came to me then about Life and Things. But not about my Prince. I always *knew* he would come. The future, God, the sun, moon, and stars might fail. But Love would come."

"And it has not?" Broadbent was surprised at his own breathlessness. But it was a night of surprises for him. And the greatest had been his utter, staggering relief when Jacqueline said that she did not love James Heath. "Love—hasn't come?" he repeated in an odd voice.

She did not answer.

"Now," she went on after a moment, "I am twenty-five. And I know that the fairy tale I dreamt—will never come true!"

He tried to laugh.

"Nonsense, Jacqueline! Twenty-five is young. There's plenty of time for your fairy tale yet." A sudden thought struck him. "See here. . . . . You're not in a hurry to leave us, for any reason, are you?"

He asked the question,

Robert flung himself to his feet with a passion electrical in its restrained violence. "Don't talk like that! You can't talk like that! What if love came later—love for somebody else?"

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so sure of an immediate negative that he felt hurt when it did not come. "I thought we'd managed to make you happy here," he said. "And you know our home is yours as long as you care to stay."

"Do-n't, Bob!" Jacqueline's voice broke, and her hand stretched out to him impulsively. "You know it is not that! You have been a brother and a—a dear, and—everything!" After a moment she went on more composedly. "I was twenty-five yesterday. And I no longer believe in my fairy tale. . . . Robert, try to understand what I am going to say. Try not to think me—unwomanly. I know that the happiness I have dreamt of won't come to me. Yet I think it's a woman's duty to marry, to make a home for some man"—her voice was very low—"to have children. If I have—any gift—it's home-making. So I think I ought to marry now."

Robert flung himself to his feet with a passion electrical in its restrained violence.

"Don't talk like that! You can't talk like that! What if love came later—love for somebody else?"

Jacqueline looked up, startled. Then her eyes again sought the fire.

"It will not."

"But that's absurd. How do you know—how *can* you know?"

Jacqueline sat very still. Her shapely hands clenched together more tightly over her knees till the knuckles showed white through the skin like little protests of ivory. A painful colour crept slowly up her soft throat and cheek to the waves of her dark hair.

"I can't let you think me cold and calculating! I can't bear for *you* to misjudge me! It will not come because——" She waited, could not go on.

In manlike impatience with subtleties, "Jacqueline!" blurted out Broadbent. "You love someone else, yet you mean to marry James Heath!"

His face was terrible in its accusation.

Jacqueline rose to meet his frown as if it were a blow. One white hand clung, strangely small and helpless, to the side of her massive brown leather chair, the other pushed back her dark cloud of hair as if it suffocated her.

"But not cheating him! Not without telling him the truth!" she cried.

The blaze in her blue eyes above her flushed cheeks made something within him break its bonds as the swollen streams of spring burst their winter barriers. He caught her roughly by the arm and drew her towards him, then suddenly almost flung her into the chair from which she had arisen.

"Jacqueline!" As if against his will her name forced its way through his teeth. He was trembling like an aspen leaf. But in a moment he managed to speak more calmly. "You don't understand. Listen, Jacqueline. The cost will be terrible. You can't be sacrificed like that! What's the matter with this other fellow? Is he a fool, or blind, that he does not love you? Tell me his name. If you love him, if you are unhappy, he *shall* love you."

Jacqueline was shivering in spite of the blazing fire. She strove desperately to stop the trembling of her lips.

"No, Bob," she said. "No." Her last words came so low that he could scarcely hear them. "He's—married." Slowly, almost against her will, her sweet eyes were drawn upward towards his.

Broadbent read their secret, appalled. All the waters of his soul seemed to rush against his ears in a glad swell of ecstasy. Jacqueline loved him! His hungry arms went out to her. But her frightened eyes had dropped.

The fires blazed hot beneath the crucible of his temptation, yet the dross clung fast to the gold. A voice within him cried out to take unto himself the happiness the gods offered, forgetting Marie, forgetting the cost. He drew nearer, devouring Jacqueline with his eyes. But as his fingers touched the dark hair, and its fragrance reached his face, he saw on her breast that which stopped him short, as if it were the finger of Fate held up to forbid. The lover's hand on her hair dropped to her shoulder, with a grip which some outer sense commanded her to believe was the brotherly, comradely affection Broadbent had always given her.

One chance in a thousand had placed that brooch on her breast, that little thing of gold and pearls which stilled the man's mad pulses and stopped an embrace that, once given, would have been irrevocable. Broadbent had given it to Marie when the boy was born, and a phantom tenderness from that sacred moment of the past spoke through it with strange authority. One chance in a thousand—or was it chance?—had caused Marie to leave it carelessly on Jacqueline's dressing-table, had created the hurry that made Jacqueline pin her frock with it quickly, instead of stopping for one of her own.

The work was done in Broadbent's soul, and the dross of passion fell away from the gold. He gripped his chair-back as if he held his own devil in those iron fingers, and looked down at Jacqueline's bowed head. She had not seen his outstretched arms, she had not understood, he told himself, the sudden flame of his eyes. At last, when he

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dared, he spoke again. His face was white, but he was master of himself.

"Tell me, Jacqueline—I want you to finish —what you started telling me."

With a little gasp as of returning consciousness, Jacqueline's tense form relaxed. In a voice steady, yet pitched deep as hidden emotion makes us pitch our voices when we know that on a higher note they will inevitably break, she took up her tale.

"I want so to do what is right, Bob—and I have no one to tell me but you. I want so much to do what *you* think is right. You see—I respect Mr. Heath, I admire him. I feel for him the warmest friendship. I have told him that I do not love him. Yet—this letter has come. He has secured a big engineering contract in Australia. He is going away. He wants me to go with him."

Broadbent listened, so still that he might not have been breathing. The clock ticked with complacent, busy futility.

She went on: "So you see the other has —can never be." A wistful little smile, piteous in its bravery, twisted her lips. "My fairy tale will never come true, but I want to live a *real* life, a useful life. I must write Mr. Heath to night. Tell me, Bob—how must I answer him?"

"Jacqueline—you are wonderful. You are the realest girl I ever knew. But you don't know, you don't realise what you are asking, dear. No human being on earth can decide a thing like that for another. If you should be unhappy afterwards——"

He stopped short, clenching his teeth.

"Happiness?" said the girl, lifting her soft eyes from the fire and looking far away through the walls of the room into some Great Beyond. "Happiness? Ah, that is another thing! And I wanted it, oh, I wanted it so. . . . But peace—perhaps Mr. Heath can give me that."

In a revelation as of lightning, Broadbent understood. Jacqueline was wiser than he. She knew she must go away. With unerring delicacy and goodness she had divined her course. There was but one thing open for her—a meaningless bond like his own. Yet even that was better than a future of nothingness. Besides—a sharp pain stabbed him. Perhaps her love for him was only a girlish fancy! Women were like that. Real love came to them often after marriage. And James Heath was a fine, honourable man.

"It is late, Bob, and I must write to him to-night. Won't you tell me what you think I ought to do?"

Robert Broadbent held his pipe in his hand. He fumbled with it as he spoke, and somehow the bowl snapped off between his rigid fingers.

"I think you have chosen wisely, dear," he said at last. "I think you should marry James Heath."

Jacqueline went to her room to write her letter to Heath. Robert stayed in the library, pacing the floor, not restlessly, but with the resigned monotony of some caged beast. Thus he awaited the home-coming of Marie.

The clock struck twelve. Presently Jacqueline came down into the hall with her letter. She laid it on the hall table to be posted by the servants in the early morning. Robert stood in the library, his back to the fireplace, watching her through the open door.

She was very pale, but quite composed. When she looked up and saw him watching her she entered the library, a faint smile on her lips.

"Waiting for Marie?" she said in a light tone.

And he understood that all that had passed between them earlier in the evening was to be buried from thenceforth behind the commonplace.

"Yes, I thought she'd be back by this."

"Oh, Dickie's such a silly child, he never knows the time. . . . There they are now!"

But the approaching motor whizzed past and did not stop.

Robert said nothing. The fire dwindled and dropped with little woebegone plops, sinking to a dull glow, done for and yet persistent. Jacqueline shivered slightly. Robert opened the coal-box mechanically, but it was empty.

"You are cold," he said very gently. "Don't wait up."

Jacqueline made no reply. She picked up James Heath's book on engineering and fortified herself behind it as behind a barrier.

The clock, which had chimed the quarter when she came into the room, chimed now the half. It was thirty minutes past midnight.

"I wonder if they could have broken down?" said Broadbent.

"They'll telephone if anything's happened," replied Jacqueline mechanically.

The clock struck the three-quarters; finally, it struck one. Broadbent went into the dining-room and brought back a half-filled coal-bucket, not wishing to wake the servants. Methodically he made up the library fire. Jacqueline gave up all pretence of reading and listened, her eyes on the clock.

Presently she rose and went over and

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stood beside him. Neither dared voice the fear that minute by minute was gaining on them both. But to Broadbent one thing became certain. He must not stand there side by side in the still house, with that girl whom he loved as he had never dreamt that he could love when he married Marie.

Every minute his sacrifice was growing more unbearable. And here she stood, so near to him, as if sweetly unconscious, her blue eyes fixed on him in anxious sympathy.

"Please go to bed," he said almost roughly.

Her eyes widened. It hurt her that he would not let her share his anxiety. But he must not see that.

"If you wish it," she said, and went quickly from the room.

At two o'clock he heard a slight rattle at the front door. He went into the hall. Unseen hands had slipped something through the letter-box. He flung the door open wide, but was met by the emptiness of the dim, sleeping street.

He re-entered the hall, closed the front door, and picked up the white envelope lying on the hall carpet. As he opened it with shaking fingers his eyes fell on the huddled figure of Jacqueline asleep at the turn of the stairs.

Unlike the rather stately Jacqueline of every day—she looked small and helpless, with the appealing helplessness of unconsciousness. One slender foot in a blue silk boudoir slipper protruded, its white ankle bare, from the pink satin bed-quilt that enveloped her. The pale blue and lace of her *négligée* ruffled in a cloud about her shoulders as she leant against the wall.

The sound of the door for which she had been listening in her sleep aroused her. She started up, expecting to see Marie. Instead, she saw Robert standing as if turned to stone, the letter in his hand. Forgetting everything but the fear in his face, she dropped the quilt in a heap on the landing, and ran down to him.

Forgetting everything but the fear in his face, she dropped the quilt in a heap on the landing, and ran down to him.

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"*What is it?* Oh, Bob, what has *happened?*"

He turned at the sound of her voice.

His face was very white. Silently he drew her towards the library fire, and with a hand that no longer trembled held out to her the letter.

Jacqueline took it as one in a dream.

DEAR BOB (it ran),

A friend will drop this in the door. Of course, you will be furious. Not that you love me—or could love any woman, except in a cold, proprietary sort of way—but because I have disarranged your scheme of things. Well, it wi l be the last time. There are some things a woman can't endure, and your self-righteousness is one of them. You'll never hear of Dickie or me any more, so do.n't try. If you want the boy to think his mother was killed in a motor accident, it's all r ght with me. If he had been a warmer-hearted child and less like you, I might not have done this at all.

We are going far away where we will be happy. And you will, too, after you have got over the shock to your dignity. Jacqueline will take care of the boy until you can arrange for him. So I'm not causing you any real inconvenience except to your pride.

Good-bye,
MARIE.

Almost as much as Marie's act the wording of her letter appalled her husband—the superficiality of it, its utter insensibility to all she was doing to other lives. She seemed to him like a child petulantly throwing down some exquisite vase of priceless value, ignorant of its worth, yet piqued beforehand at the retribution her deed would surely bring.

Jacqueline was shaking in every limb. A sudden impulse made her catch Broadbent's hand and caress it blindly, striving mutely to console what she took to be his stoical suffering. She loved Marie devotedly. But her own pain and shame were forgotten in the greater suffering she believed must inevitably be his.

Robert could not bear that mute caress. He drew his hand away, still silent, went to the table, and sank into a chair, burying his face in his arms.

There was a long silence.

At last he spoke.

"How can I make it up to the boy?" he breathed.

His mention of the child brought Jacqueline merciful tears, though she fought hard for self-control.

"*I* will help you," she sobbed. "He *need never* understand. No one can quite *be a mother*, but all that I can give him to *take her place* I will! You may be sure, *quite sure* of that."

"But you," said Robert dully, "are going away with James Heath. You are going to Australia."

With his words the utter preposterousness of the thing struck them both. Jacqueline on the point of going away! Jacqueline leaving him and the boy! Jacqueline going to Australia!

He looked up, and a certain childish helplessness in his strong face touched her to the heart.

"Jacqueline," he cried hoarsely, "don't leave me!"

His hands groped blindly and found hers. Thrilled by the exquisite shock of his fingers, she looked into his eyes, her own eyes full of surprise, a dawning wonder at last a glad belief. For she read in them all that his sense of shock, of shame, perhaps of common decency, forbade him to say. In their pain and glory the future held out its arms to her. And silent, unsmiling, but full of an inner radiance that transformed her, she understood, and understanding, remembered the letter.

Without a word she gently loosed herself from his clasp, and went into the hall, her blue draperies whispering softly about her slender bare ankles and dainty, silk-shod feet. From the hall table she picked up her letter to James Heath.

She paused a second on her way back to the library. It was as if she must be alone an instant even from Robert, alone with the wonderful thing that had so suddenly happened to her.

She stood for a moment transfigured while the dizzying glory passed over her. Then she returned to Broadbent and placed the letter in his hand. In her gesture there was the solemn ecstasy of sacrament.

Robert took the letter from her cold fingers.

"Jacqueline," he said in a voice that shook, "I was wrong. Never, *never* marry a man without love! Promise me you never will."

It was all he dared say as yet, but it was enough.

Jacqueline's blue eyes lifted to his full of trust, of sorrow and shame, and of a happiness that seemed purified as though by fire.

"I promise," she said in an odd voice that trembled a little.

Together they threw the letter to James Heath into the dying embers and watched as it blackened angrily, resentfully, sent up a curl of smoke, and then a protesting flame, shrivelled, and lost itself in the dull red glow

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Why Don't You Go To Church?

The Rev. F. W. Gillingham, author of the following striking article.

By the Rev. F. W. Gillingham.

Regular church-going is noticeably on the decrease. In the following arresting article the Rev. F. W. Gillingham, Rector of Bermondsey—well-known not only as a preacher, but as the author of forcible articles and a notable cricketer—puts forward some striking suggestions to account for the prevailing indifference to religious worship.

The position and the influence of the Church is attracting a great deal of attention just now.

Some are inclined to think that the Church is a spent force, and I noticed a recent article in a popular weekly paper under the somewhat startling title of "The Church on Its Last Legs."

The article was sent to me, and I confess it was somewhat disconcerting, but through it all I noticed a tone of exaggeration, and exaggerated statements always defeat their own purpose. We have a forcible example of this in the "Air Commission," recently held to investigate charges brought against the Flying Forces by an air M.P. Moreover, in the article I thought I detected spleen. I do not know who the person is who wrote it, but reading between the lines I could not help thinking that this man has a grievance, and under anonymity he is having a "dig" at the powers that be.

The Problem of Empty Pews.

However, quite apart from the article and quite apart from the exaggeration, we have to face the fact that the majority of men do not go to church, and the purpose of this article is to try and state the reasons for their abstention.

Just at present we quite understand why our young men should not be found in the House of God, but we clergy are rather apt airily to state, "of course we have no men *now*," as if in peace time our churches were packed with them, whereas the fact is that, with very few notable exceptions, there was before the war a marked absence of men between eighteen and forty-five.

Why is this? Whose fault is it? I think the answer can be given under three headings:

I. The fault of the clergy.
II. The fault of the laity.
III. The fault of the Church machinery.

It is easy for the laity to abuse the parson. He is considered a fit butt for quips and jokes, and any mannerism is noticed and extravagantly reproduced. If he goes to the theatre, he is a gay old boy; if he doesn't, he is narrow-minded and prejudiced. If he is a teetotaller, he is a fanatic; if he isn't, he does himself well.

The clergy might well reply that they are conscious of many limitations, and perhaps the chief is the fact that they have only the laity to recruit from, but we shall not solve the question under discussion by shunning each other. I will try and voice some of the reasons I have had given me for non-church going.

Dull Services—Bored Worshippers.

The first is that church is oftentimes so deadly dull, there seems so little real worship. Who hasn't noticed the bored expression on the faces of the congregation as the same old routine is wound off almost as if from a gramophone Sunday after Sunday? If the choir is a good one (that is, a paid choir consisting of men of varying occupations and perhaps with varying ideas) the canticles are all sung to such fantastic tunes that it is impossible to join in. The psalms, too, are generally beyond the ordinary congregations whose prayer books are not "pointed," and though frequently the lips

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are moving no sound is produced, and there is no heart in the singing.

When it comes to the hymns the congregation might with some justice hope to have an opportunity of expressing themselves, and my firm conviction is that men and women love to sing. But here again too often the choice of hymns is left to the decision of the choir-master, whose aim usually seems to be exaltation of the choir rather than the spiritual worship of the congregation, with the result that familiar hymns are eschewed lest the congregation should "drag" them (that is, join in and thoroughly enjoy them), and new and difficult hymns are chosen.

I am not at all sure that the time hasn't come when, with the exception of cathedrals, colleges, and certain other churches, the professional choir-man and the mischievous little choir-boy should be abolished, and devoted men and women should lead the praises in the House of God. We should lose a certain amount of picturesqueness, and it would mean the introduction of women into leading positions in church; but whatever our loss, of one thing I am certain, that we should gain enormously in hearty and devotional worship.

Consider the Congregation.

The parson should break free from the tyranny of choirs and choir-masters, and in this as in all other things insist that the interests of the congregation should be put before the selection of the choir. People do appreciate good music, and will listen attentively to a good anthem well and intelligently rendered, and there is no reason why such should not be sung at every service; but the great majority do not wish their worship to be done by proxy, and show their disapproval by staying away.

Again, how very unreal the "parson's voice" sounds! What affectations he develops, how seldom he gives the impression that he is a messenger of God heralding the good news that there is a Peace for the restless wanderer and a Hell for the unrepentant and wilful wrong-doer.

The sermon, too, is so often uninspiring and dull, bearing upon subjects about which the man in the pew knows little and cares less. Gone are the days for long dissertations on deep theological subtleties, interesting enough for the man in the study, but absolutely beside the mark for the man who on the morrow wants to go straight when confronted with the many crooked paths which will open out before him.

I cannot help thinking that the ordinary parson is sadly out of touch with life. Once ordained, once entitled to wear the parson's collar and that awful invention the parson's hat, he becomes a member of a "caste," and unless he mixes with men in some unofficial capacity, on some common platform, he becomes more and more a man apart, and preaches and thinks about things which interest him deeply, but which leave the ordinary man in the pew quite cold.

My earnest conviction is that men are not "unreligious"—they often appear "irreligious"—but deep down they have spots which can be touched, but the Church as she at present expresses herself isn't and hasn't the power to touch them.

I could say much more on this side of my subject, but lest I should give the false impression that the empty pews are all due to the faults of the clergy alone, I will now turn to my second reason.

The Layman's Responsibility.

It is easy for the layman to complain—it is an Englishman's privilege to grumble, and perhaps that is the one privilege up to which he fully lives. But the old rule holds good, *vis.*, that representation involves taxation. If I speak about finance it is not because I think finance is of the first importance, but because finance is something the value of which all laymen are supposed to understand, and because the ordinary layman unconsciously shows how much he appreciates a thing by the extent to which he is willing to support it.

Do You Support the Church?

You laymen complain of rotten sermons and badly-ordered services, that no one ever comes to visit you, that you never see your parson. Let me ask you just this one question: How much—judging by the standard of finance—do you value your church? Is your weekly contribution anything more than the price you pay for a whisky-and-soda after a round at golf?

What heart do you give a man to throw himself body, soul, and spirit into your interests when he realises he is not more to you than an ounce of tobacco or a Saturday evening's jaunt? What encouragement does a young curate get? His education has in many cases cost hundreds and hundreds of pounds, and after that he goes out and gets a paltry £150 per annum—he doesn't object to that, for he has made up his mind long ago that his will not be a lucrative profession—but he suffers some humiliation when he realises what a job it is to scratch that paltry sum together. It is only through jumble sales and bazaars and many such indirect ways that he can get what is his due.

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Crippling the Clergy.

The parson frequently feels that the ordinary layman doesn't care more than the sixpence he puts in the plate what becomes of the Church. Therefore the fire is taken out of him; he has to preach those loathsome begging sermons, which no one loathes more than the man who preaches them; he becomes worried over financial matters and has to appear small and petty, unable to launch out, unable to make improvements, unable to do what he knows would be advisable because he feels that every fresh expense means an added burden for his own back.

I repeat finance is not the only thing, not even the most important thing, but finance is a very good gauge, and a sixpence in the plate means sixpennyworth of interest, of activity, of initiative, of thought. How very often the sixpence is a threepenny bit, and, more often still, a copper!

You don't expect much of an entertainment, or a feed, or a drink for a copper, and it is thoroughly immoral to "support" the Church with a copper and expect a tip-top service, good sermon, a well warmed and lighted church. In short, if you can't get your ninepence for fourpence, even though backed by the legislation of the land, how can you reasonably expect the "rare and refreshing fruits" of the Church for a penny?

I know you laymen have much cause for grumbling, and so have the parsons, and I am not sure that we haven't more justification for our "grouse" than you have for yours.

If you really supported the Church you would see that things were better, you would have a right to complain, you would find us ready to take your advice, you would find that the Church would be "in the van" instead of being, as she so often is, "in the cart."

Wanted, Up-to-Date Methods!

The third reason why men don't go to church is because much of the Church machinery is out-of-date and wants scrapping.

Go through some of our great factories, and you will see comparatively modern machinery scrapped to make room for machinery that is more modern still.

Look at the wonderful strides made by science, education, and medicine. What were once standard text books have been shelved, and others representing the carefully considered conclusions of men with an enlarged experience have taken their place, but the dear old Church goes on in its old archaic way, asking every Sunday that our judges may "indifferently minister justice" and solemnly asking our Lord to give us peace because there is none other that fighteth for us but Himself.

The Prayer Book is magnificent on its literary side, and none of us who have used it and loved it wish to give it up; but most of us wish to have it supplemented, and unless we have it brought up-to-date we shall find that men will stay away from church in ever-increasing numbers.

We are thinking a great deal, and rightly, about our sailors and soldiers, but prior to the war who ever heard the Army and the Navy mentioned in church? We have petitions for many things and many people, we pray several times on Sunday for the King; we have a prayer for fair weather and for rain, but we never use them unless we are *in extremis* from drought or flood.

Our Limited Prayers.

We have many prayers for Bishops and curates and all the congregations committed to their charge, but nothing for policemen or firemen—in short, nothing for the vast army who wear the King's uniform in one shape or another. There is nothing for the railwaymen in whose hands are intrusted millions of passengers, nothing for our priceless merchant service, nothing for hospitals and infirmaries, nothing for labour, nothing for education; nothing for colonies and missionary work, nothing, in short, for things that are a reality to us, and this is one of the reasons why morning and evening prayer is so often dull, useless, and perfunctory.

Everyone is convinced that the revision of the Prayer Book is long overdue, but it is shelved because the Church is at "sixes and sevens," and is chiefly concerned about reviving and restoring archaic vestments which haven't the least interest for ninety per cent. of her flock.

There are several other reforms which are long overdue. Who doesn't know of country parishes where the parson is bordering on second childhood, and can't retire because he has nothing to retire on? A superannuation scheme must be brought in, for you cannot expect healthy young men to go to church when, owing to infirm old age, the parson's voice can't carry further than the first half-dozen pews.

I have by no means exhausted my subject, but perhaps I had better stop lest I should exhaust the patience of my readers. I have tried to be practical without being venomous. If unconsciously I have wounded anybody I am deeply sorry. If, on the other hand, I have spoken "sense," I wish that you laymen would bestir yourselves and agitate and agitate until the Church is brought out of the backwater into the full stream of Life.

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BASIL'S KNICKERBOCKERS.

By E. Newton Bungey.

"If you wish in this world to advance,
Your merits you're bound to enhance;
You must stir it and stump it,
And blow your own trumpet,
Or, trust me, you haven't a chance!"

I.

The Reverend James Maxwell put down his pen as a noise like rolling thunder was heard outside his study door. He performed the action in the mechanical manner born of long practice, for he knew that the noise heralded the arrival of the twins, and work would be out of the question.

Basil and Barbara burst into the room like a tornado, and hurled themselves at their adoring though long-suffering parent.

"Father, Mr. Blobb asked me if we were going to the sea, because he said I'd got on bathing-drawers," shouted Basil, pointing to his knickerbockers.

The garments which had called forth the witty effort of Mr. Blobb certainly showed large portions of Basil's thighs, but new knickerbockers cost money, and the parson's stipend was only £150.

As if to show still further with what scant ceremony her husband's privacy was treated, Mrs. Maxwell danced into the room and sat lightly on his knee.

"Look at Basil's knickerbockers," said James.

"They are rather difficult to see," observed Peggy Maxwell. "Give me five-and-six and I'll buy him a new pair."

Her husband counted out three-and-ninepence.

"I want eighteenpence of that for old Mrs. Miller's liniment," he said, running his fingers through his hair, a rueful expression on his face.

"Then Basil must wait," exclaimed Peggy. "Look, here comes the postman! Suppose he's got a letter from the Bishop offering you a big living!"

James scraped the dust out of his pouch into his pipe as his wife ran out, but before he could light up, Peggy sped back with a letter.

"It's from Robert," she cried. "Perhaps he's got the old bish—hm! his lordship staying there again."

Her husband opened the letter, read it, sighed, and handed the document to Peggy. It ran as follows:

Dear James,

The Bishop of Wincaston is staying with me for a few days, and he tells me that the Welford living is vacant. I mentioned your name, and he said he will be pleased to hear you preach at our parish church on Sunday. I have seen our rector, and he is willing to exchange with you for that day.

Might I suggest that you put a little more go into your sermon this time, otherwise he will turn you down as he did when the Torby living was going?

I will send the car over for you on Friday and send you back on Monday.

Please convey my respects and love to Margaret and the children.

Your affectionate brother,
Robert Maxwell.

"Oh, goodness!" exclaimed Peggy, saucily turning her pretty face to her husband. "Convey it!"

James did, and then stared thoughtfully at the letter.

"The Welford living is worth six hundred a year," he said, "and the rectory gardens make a big profit in addition."

"It must be ours, James!" exclaimed Peggy. "I wish I could preach to his lordship; I'd put some vim into it. I am sure I should have made a lovely parson."

"I agree with the adjective, my dear. Oh! Look at Barbara, she's making spills of my sermon."

"These will save matches," announced Barbara solemnly.

"Well, you won't need it," observed Peggy. "You must write a fresh one for the Bishop, and it must be a screamer."

"Peggy! I'm not writing a song for a revue."

"I wish you could; there's more money in it than in sermon writing, and we all want new clothes so badly."

"I suppose I shall have to go," James

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said, "but the idea makes me shudder. Those pompous servants at the Hall always make me feel as though I am beneath contempt."

"You don't swank enough, James."

Her husband frowned at the slang, but was disarmed by a mischievous smile.

"Come along," cried Peggy, "let's get your things ready. I think they are all darned, but I'm not sure."

II.

Robert Maxwell's valet entered the butler's parlour at Ford Hall.

"The parson brother will be here from Friday to Monday, Mr. Walker," he announced.

A look of disapproval crossed the dignified features of the butler.

"I'm sorry to hear your news, Mr. Budd," he said. "I have not got over his last visit. He hacshually had the haudacity to give me one shilling when he left. A shilling, Mr. Budd. An unpardonable hinsult."

It was Mr. Walker's boast that he never dropped an aitch, but he made up for it in another manner.

"Kindly touch the bell, Mr. Budd," he said.

The valet obeyed, and a kitchen-maid appeared.

"Kindly hinform Henery that I require him," said the butler, who made it a rule to be very polite to those beneath him.

Henry, Robert Maxwell's footman, appeared presently, and bowed in response to Mr. Walker's courteous wave of the hand.

"Mr. Budd has brought us some bad news, Henery," said the butler. "The parson brother will be here from Friday to Monday."

"He offered me sixpence when he was here before," observed Henry. "I requested 'im to put it in the missionary-box."

"A smart reply, Henery," said Mr. Walker. "I hexpect it crushed him."

"He thanked me very much," responded the footman gloomily, "and said 'e would see that my wishes was carried out."

"He's a disgrace to the fam'ly," announced Mr. Budd.

"And he must be taught so," said Mr. Walker. "Hit must be seen to on this hoccasion."

A lengthy consultation took place, assisted by a bottle from the butler's cupboard, and a proper reception was prepared for the Reverend James Maxwell.

That gentleman duly arrived on Friday afternoon, bringing one small bag with him.

"Is your luggage following, sir?" asked Henry, gazing fixedly at the bag.

"This is my luggage," replied James, his cheeks crimsoning.

A look of pained surprise crossed the footman's face. He picked up the bag as though it were something repulsive, and James entered the house, where the butler bowed coldly to him.

"How are you, Walker?" asked James.

"I ham henjoying very good health, sir," replied the butler. "I trust you are the same."

"Yes, thanks. Where is my brother?"

"Mr. Maxwell and his lordship are golfing, sir, though they hexpected to be home in time to meet you."

"All right, I'll go up. The same room as before?"

"Henery will take you up, sir," replied the butler in dignified tones.

James followed the footman upstairs, and was presently left alone. But not for long, for Mr. Budd entered the room swiftly and seized James' bag.

"Is your man with you, sir?" he asked.

"I think I told you last time that I have not got a valet," replied James.

Mr. Budd looked sad and disapproving at the same time. He did not speak, but he succeeded in making James feel that he ought to apologise.

"I will unpack for you, sir," said Mr. Budd.

"Oh, please don't trouble!" exclaimed James, remembering the garments which Peggy had darned hurriedly just before he left.

"It is Mr. Maxwell's wishes, sir," said the valet, taking no notice of James' feeble gesture of protest.

One by one Mr. Budd laid the garments out, his look of amazed horror deepening with each. He contrived to lay them out so that all the patches showed prominently, and a fervent desire to kick him out of the room grew up in James.

He resisted it successfully, however, for he had schooled himself to be meek, though the task had been hard. At Cambridge Jimmy Maxwell had been a well-known figure in undergraduate "rags," but he had lived the memory down.

It took Mr. Budd about a quarter-of-an-hour to unpack half-a-dozen garments and place them in a chest of drawers, and during that time James lived through a lifetime of agony.

At length, however, the parson was left alone, and he sank into a chair and wiped his moist brow.

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A look of pained surprise crossed the footman's face. He picked up the bag and James entered the house, where the butler bowed coldly to him. "How are you, Walker?" asked James.

III.

James descended the stairs, the butler taking scarcely any notice of him as he walked across the hall, and entered the morning-room.

Here he found Robert and the Bishop, who greeted him in a pompous manner that reminded him strangely of Mr. Walker.

Robert was very deferential to the Bishop of Wincaston, but he was inclined to treat James more like a small brother home from school.

"I am looking forward to hearing you preach on Sunday, Mr. Maxwell," said the Bishop.

James thanked him, and wished inwardly that he was looking forward to delivering the sermon.

When the dressing-bell rang Mr. Budd knocked at the door of James' room, and entered.

"Mr. Maxwell sent me in to 'elp you, sir," he said.

"Thank you," replied James nervously, "but I do not need help. I have only a coat to change."

The valet turned his eyes up with an expression of pious horror, and again James felt the carnal desire rising within him, though it was counterbalanced by a feeling of his insignificance created by Mr. Budd's attitude.

A long and tedious dinner followed, during which Robert and the Bishop went over their afternoon's golf almost stroke by stroke, each explaining how they might have been under bogey for every hole instead of two or three over it. James, whose handicap was four, was given little chance of joining in the conversation.

He was carefully watched over by Mr. Walker and Henry, who informed him what wines he should drink, not crediting him with the knowledge.

After dinner a previous game of golf was discussed by Robert and the Bishop, and James was not at all sorry when it was proposed that they should retire.

He undressed quickly and got into bed, fearing lest Mr. Budd should desire to assist him. Just as he was between the sheets the valet knocked and entered.

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Without a word he made for James' under-garments, which, alas! were even more patched than the emergency set he had brought with him.

"I don't require anything more, thank you," said James.

"I am only going to take your clothes, sir," responded Mr. Budd.

"Don't trouble; they are all right where they are," said the parson.

But Mr. Budd picked up the garments and carried them outside. There he examined them, and then carried them down to the butler's parlour.

"Worser than a tramp's," he exclaimed.

Henry and Mr. Walker, who were absorbing refreshments, paused to examine James' clothes. Unable to speak, they regarded one another with horrified expressions.

"What a disgrace!" gasped Henry at length.

"It's enough to make a man give notice," Mr. Walker observed.

Next morning when James awoke he found his garments neatly folded, but in such a manner that the darned patches simply shrieked at him. With an ingenuity that was almost devilish Mr. Budd had managed to display all the worst of Peggy's efforts.

James shivered as he saw his garments. He realised in a moment with what care Mr. Budd had folded them, and again there crept over him that intense longing to kick the valet and the butler as hard as he possibly could.

But he recollected that he was a minister, and that it was his duty to be meek. Accordingly he went downstairs prepared to speak kindly to the butler, but Mr. Walker did not appear to see him.

James glanced round in an almost shamefaced manner, and slunk through on to the terrace. He had scarcely been there two minutes ere he heard the voices of Robert and the Bishop.

"I'm afraid your brother won't do for the Welford living, Maxwell," said his lordship. "He's a decent sort of fellow and all that, but he's got no 'go' in him. He can't say 'Bo' to a goose."

"Yes, I'm sorry for poor James," agreed Robert.

The parson stroked his chin thoughtfully. So Robert regarded him as "poor James," and the Bishop said he had no "go" in him. But it did not stop there, now James began to think of things. The butler and the valet despised him, and even Basil and Barbara tyrannised over him, whilst Peggy could twist him round her little finger.

They were all tyrants and oppressors, and they took advantage of his meek and humble disposition. He was half inclined to pack his bag there and then and depart, but he remembered Basil's knickerbockers. If only he could get the Welford living Basil should have lots of pairs of new knickers.

Why should they tyrannise over him? Why should he be, as it were, despised and rejected? Of course, Peggy and the twins did not despise him, and certainly Peggy had not rejected him. Nevertheless, there

Off the third tee James hit a splendid ball far down the middle of the fairway. . . . "There's more in your brother than I thought," said the Bishop to Robert.

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was something radically wrong, or everybody would not try to sit on him.

Peggy had told him he ought to be more self assertive—though she had not put it exactly like that. She had told him to swank. He wondered what the effect would be on the Bishop and Robert. How would they take it? Why not try? Why not show that he had some "go" in him?

James was very silent during breakfast, and after the meal Robert asked him what he proposed to do with himself.

James, completely out of control, took a running kick at the valet.
[Page 36, col. 1.]

James had been considering this point, and he had nerved himself up to propose that he played a round of golf with the Bishop and Robert. In days gone by the parson had been a very useful man on the links, with a handicap of four, though he often played down to scratch. But a poor parson cannot afford to play golf regularly, and James had only played a few rounds since he had been a vicar. All the same, however, he felt he could give the Bishop and Robert a good game.

"What do you think of doing?" repeated Robert.

"Are you and the Bishop playing golf?" asked James.

"Yes."

"Then let me play your best ball, though you will have to lend me some clubs."

"My dear James!" exclaimed Robert, in the tones of a parent reproving a too forward child.

But James stuck to his point, and the Bishop proved to be agreeable, though a trifle amused.

On the first tee James felt horribly nervous. He kept on thinking about Basil's knickerbockers, and all that the new living would mean, and the result was that he sliced badly into the rough. He failed to make a good recovery, and so lost the first hole. The second he managed to halve, but as it was a five hole and they halved in seven, it did not say much for the golf. But off the third tee James hit a splendid ball far down the middle of the fairway.

After that James settled down to it. Handicapped a little by the strange clubs, he did not play down to four perhaps, but he put in some very good and useful shots, and won by 4 and 3. By that time he had the caddies worshipping him, eager to do his slightest bidding, and a distinct change had come over Robert and his lordship.

"There's more in your brother than I thought," said the Bishop to Robert.

A subtle change came over James as the result of his companions' manner, and a sudden sense of power came to him as he observed the way in which the caddies sought to carry out his wishes. As a result he began to air his private views on the various subjects of conversation, and he sparkled inwardly when he disagreed with Robert, and the latter did not snub him.

They lunched at the golf club and played another round in the afternoon, James winning easily, though he conceded greater odds, for he had got back to his old form again.

"I'm tired!" exclaimed the parson, as they reached home and stepped on to the terrace close to where the butler stood like a statue of dignity in the main doorway.

"Walker!" exclaimed James. "Bring me a chair. I'm going to sit here."

The Bishop and Robert had gone through

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into the house, so that the butler and the parson had the stage to themselves.

Mr. Walker pretended not to hear the request. He remained statue-like, staring in a lofty manner across the park.

"Anything the matter with your hearing?" demanded James. "I told you to bring me a chair."

The butler looked like a man who had had a tooth drawn unexpectedly and very painfully. That he should be spoken to in this manner by the despised parson brother was the last thing he had dreamt of. He moved slowly, and his trousers creasing tightly over his fat limbs caused James to think of Basil's knickerbockers again.

"Quick!" he exclaimed sharply,

The masterful ring in his voice knocked the last ounce of fight out of Walker, and he carried a chair out in double quick time.

"Send Henry out with some cigarettes," commanded James.

Mr. Walker communicated the order to the footman.

"He won't come it over me," said Henry.

But when he carried out the cigarettes his hostile stare buckled under the steady gaze of James, and he obediently struck a match and lit the parson's cigarette.

At dinner that night James issued his orders with a brevity that astounded Henry and Mr. Walker, but they obeyed his commands with a marked celerity.

He did not hurry into bed that night, but sat down in his pyjamas and kept his slippers on. They were heavy slippers, bought by Peggy with a view to economy and not to beauty. James found a strange comfort in their weight to-night as he sat thinking of many things—chiefly of his patched garments, Mr. Budd, and Basil's knickerbockers.

Presently there came the expected knock at the door, and Mr. Budd entered. James did not look at him until he put his hand on the patched garments.

"What are you doing?" asked the parson suddenly, a rasp in his voice.

"Just going to take your clothes to fold, sir," replied the valet.

"I told you last night to leave them alone, and I tell you so again," rapped out James. "Kindly do as you're told."

Mr Budd fingered a garment so as to display a large patch.

"But, sir——" he began.

James sprang to his feet and dashed forward. With an exclamation of dismay Mr. Budd turned his back, and James, completely out of control, took a running kick at the valet, who, however, managed to avoid it by shooting out of the room at about twenty miles an hour.

Then James sat on his bed and laughed, but mingled with his mirth was a certain amount of regret as he eyed his slipper.

IV.

Next morning James was waited on quickly and well, and there was almost a swagger in his walk as he went to church. He had brought a sermon with him, but he left it in his bag, for he had decided to preach extempore. Mr. Budd, Mr. Walker, and Henry were all in church, and they eyed James with curious expressions as he stepped up into the pulpit. Robert nerved himself to keep awake, and the Bishop sighed softly.

In clear, steady tones James gave out his text:

"'But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.'"

Then he commenced to speak of the duty of man to his neighbour, of the petty tyrannies which are more often indulged in than charity, of backbiting, which is more enjoyed than uttering praise. But especially did he harp on tyrants.

And as he preached he thought of Basil's knickerbockers, and it urged him on to utilise to its full the gift which he had hitherto been timid of using—the gift of preaching extempore.

Many of his hearers writhed secretly, and Robert and his staff were amongst them. The Bishop did not miss a single word, and he would have willingly heard more.

"An excellent sermon, Mr. Maxwell," he said as they strolled home. "You have improved immeasurably since I heard you last. What is the explanation, I wonder?"

James maintained a discreet silence, for he doubted if the Bishop would accept Basil's knickerbockers as an explanation.

If anything, James received more attention that day from the servants than Robert or the Bishop did, but he took it with the calm air of one who is receiving his due. That night, as James prepared to go to bed, the Bishop took him on one side.

"I shall be glad if you will take Welford, Maxwell," he said. "I've got a man to fill your place, so you can move in at once."

When James left the car and entered the vicarage next day, Peggy stared at him before she ran and kissed him.

"James!" she exclaimed. "You're swanking! Why, I do believe you've got it."

"I have," he replied, "but James me no more. In future I am Jim. James was buried with due ceremony by Mr. Walker, Mr. Budd, and Henry. Where's Basil? Let's go and buy him some knickerbockers."

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For "Soldiers and Sailors Too"

All the contributions on this page were sent in by officers and men serving in H.M. Forces. A pack of ROYAL playing-cards or a silver pencil-case is given for every accepted storyette, joke, bit of verse, or drawing sent in by a sailor or soldier. Please say which gift you prefer, and address envelopes to The O.C., ROYAL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

OUGHT TO BE IN IT.

While waiting for the doors to open at a music-hall the other evening, the subject turned on the question of aliens and what an alien was. One young fellow of about twenty-two summers, thinking to put a poser, remarked: "Look at me; my father was a German, my mother a Russian, and I was born in an Italian port. What would you call me?"

Quick as a flash a young girl replied: "You must be a slacker or else you'd be fighting somewhere."

A BROAD HINT.

There was a pretty girl at Brighton to whom a young private was saying good bye.

"Good-bye," he said. "Good-bye. To-morrow we shall be miles and miles apart."

The girl looked at the blue sea, and her lip curled. "Miles and miles apart, eh?" she said. "Well, we're not very close now."

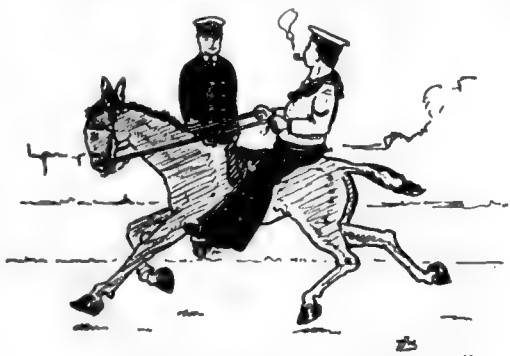
KEPT FOR THE COW.

Some time ago the commanding officer of a military station gave orders that no one should be allowed to walk on the grass where the cow was pastured. The next day the General's wife, wishing to take a short cut, started to walk across the grass.

"No one to pass here, madam," said the sentry.

The lady drew herself up. "Do you know who I am?" she demanded.

"No, madam," replied the impassive soldier. "I do not know who you are, but I know you are not the General's cow, and nobody else is permitted to walk on the grass."



OFFICER: "Why don't you sit amidships, my man?"
JACK: "Well, sir, seeing as I'm in command, I thought I might as well sit on the quarter-deck."

TIME FOR A HARP.

Two soldiers were talking in a canteen.

"Hullo, Mick!" said one, "buyin' them rotten fags again? Why don't you get some decent ones?"

"Well, ye see, mate," said the other, "it's like this. When I get two thousand o' these 'ere coupons wot's in the packits, I'll get a grand pianner."

His companion laughed. "When you gets two thousand of them coupons ye'll not want a grand pianner, ye'll want a golden 'arp," he said.

PERSONAL LUGGAGE ONLY.

Latest Draft Recruit to Tommy (about to go over the top to mend wire entanglements, carrying a couple of coils of barbed wire, stakes, hand bombs, etc.):

"What! going wiring, matey?"

TOMMY: "No, old chap, I'm just off on leave."

SIGNPOST WANTED!

A subaltern of the R.F.A. was returning from the trenches to his Battery H.Q. somewhere in France immediately prior to going on "leave." At a communication-trench junction about two hundred yards behind the front line he came across a bewildered-looking Highlander, who it afterwards transpired was returning from leave, and endeavouring to find his company who were in the front line.

At the time there was considerable activity—shells, machine guns and bombs all in unison—and the Highlander was standing scratching his head, looking up and down the trench, obviously having lost his way. On the approach of the officer he summoned up his courage and springing smartly to attention, said:

"Please sir, can ye tell me the way to the war?"

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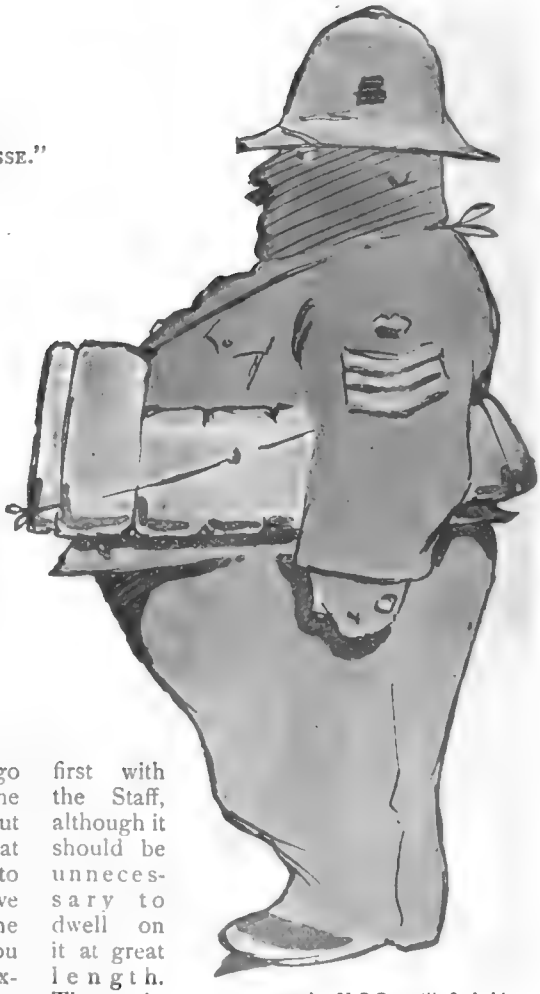
Who's Who at the Front.

By "Fougasse."

Life-belts don't suit every figure, so don't blame the Transport Officer if yours is not becoming——

These illuminating hints should be taken to heart by all who are off on Active Service for the first time, since though quite unofficial, they will put new-comers *au fait* with some of the personages whom it will be their lot to encounter at the Front.



——your portly N.C.O. will find his even more disfiguring.

To those of you who go out to the Front for the first time a few hints about the various people that you are most likely to run across on Active Service may not come amiss, and may help you to recognise them at maximum range and make your dispositions accordingly.

The tyro might consider that the easiest method is to observe their collar and cap badges and then to refer to a jeweller's catalogue or shilling handbook of crests of the British Army. This method, however, has the disadvantage that you cannot put it into practice until at such close quarters that escape is impossible, and to "feign dead" in the presence of those whom you wish to avoid is an evolution requiring more skill than is at the disposal of the average man.

Discipline demands that we should deal first with the Staff, although it should be unnecessary to dwell on it at great length. The main point to be borne in mind is that it is garnished with scarlet patches as to its raiment (with, occasionally, speech to match).

You will find it to a great extent a race apart, existing for you mainly in the form of field messages, of which more later.

The young of the Staff, by the way, usually keeps the key of the cellar, and often repays the trouble of a visit to its lair.

When in the trenches, one of the first men you will run up against will be the Front Line Inspector of Nuisances

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The A.S.C. officer may meet your request for supplies in a somewhat grudging spirit, but throw yourself on his mercy and you will find that he has a tender heart.

—that is to say, the Field Company Sapper Officer.

I may say at once that there is practically no escaping him, and the attempt is not worth the trouble involved. If he cannot pin down his prey in any other way, he has recourse to a number of disguises, and has even been known to play the part of a roll of barbed wire in order to catch an unwary subaltern in the act of neglecting his parapet.

The only counter to this form of attack is an immediate demand for sandbags—thousands of them—for thus you touch him in his tenderest spot.

Taken the right way, he is a charming fellow, and his R.E. Store contains an assortment of the most delightful things, ranging from field forges, which snort like a Sergeant-Major when they are stepped on, to set-squares and sal ammoniac.

Never, however, make the mistake of asking him for your bare needs. If you require a pump, for instance, straightway demand of him ten pumps, five hundred sandbags, two rolls of barbed wire, and the loan of a prismatic compass—and perhaps you'll get what you want. If you get something else on the list instead, you can always barter it back to him, but—it won't be the sandbags.

Now we come to the Army Service Corps, the officers of which can usually be distinguished by their faultlessly-cut riding-breeches and immaculate footwear. Whenever you run up against one of them, cultivate his acquaintance;

The "Drain Dragoon" or Tunneller may scorn your suggestion that the enemy is mining beneath your abode, but state that your trench is the safest in the line and he will be eager to prove you wrong.

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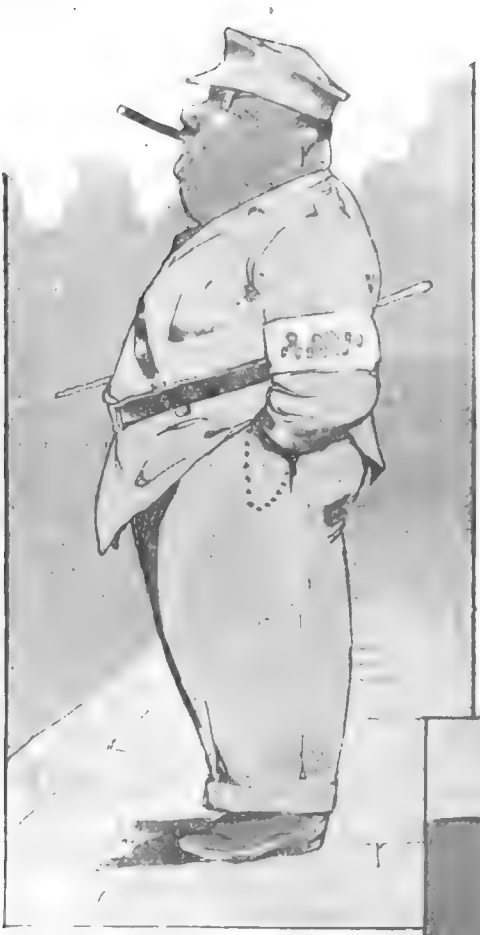

At the base you will meet officers engaged in sundry jobs known as "Base Duties." Keep in with them, for they can smooth your path wonderfully.

he's the man who feeds you, and any little service you can do for him will not be thrown away.

The A.S.C. officer has many good qualities, but he has to unload the inferior stuff on to someone occasionally, so keep on the right side of him. In fact, even if he tells you, as he often will, that he "hasn't got any, but will probably have some in to-morrow," with a stack of the goods you want staring you both in the face, don't try to bounce him—just throw yourself on his mercy, for he has a tender heart.

Signal Officers (branded with a blue and white armlet) will not trouble you much in the ordinary course of events, unless you use their telephone-wires for securing the roof of your dug-out.

Their minions, on the other hand, undoubtedly *will* trouble you.

At all hours of the day and night these latter have a habit of swooping down on unsuspecting individuals, and thrusting upon them clusters of fluttering pink leaflets, containing such phrases as (I quote one of the most customary): "This work to be put in hand immediately, and to take precedence of all other duties."

During your stay in the trenches you will often meet a certain curious tribe, the members of which are usually much bent as to the back, much begrimed all over, and who blink and peer as if ill-accustomed to the light of day.

Occasionally, if you watch carefully, you will observe them disappearing down little shafts and holes in the ground, from which issue variegated sounds, indicating acute activity.

These are the Tunnellers, the "Drain Dragoons." Their job it is "deep in the bowels of the earth" (every journalist works off that phrase about them) to be funny at the enemy's expense. When the said enemy is also similarly engaged, the fun "below stairs" waxes fast and furious.

"Message from Brigade H.Q., sir!" This is the daily cry of the Signal Officer's minions, who will swoop upon you at all hours with fluttering pink leaflets.

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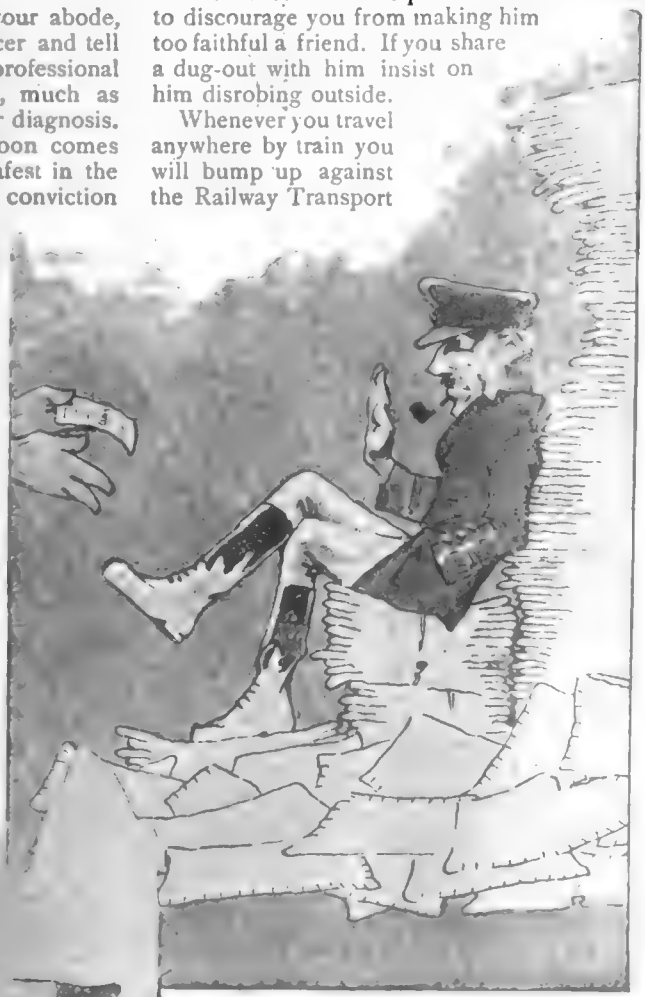
The Tunneller is an expert, and to be humoured as such. If you think that the foeman is getting busy beneath your abode, do not call up a Tunnelling Officer and tell him so, for he will, from professional etiquette, scorn your suggestion, much as a doctor would scorn an amateur diagnosis. Remark when your Drain Dragoon comes round that your trench is the safest in the whole line, and state as your firm conviction that no one could possibly be mining anywhere in the neighbourhood. He will then be all eagerness to prove that you are wrong.

Many other specialists will you meet—the Trench Mortar man, for instance, who poses as your friend. At all costs, however, try to prevent his little machines nesting anywhere in your vicinity, even for a moment. They certainly give moral support while they are with you, but half-an-hour after they have flitted to the next beat, retaliation will inevitably arrive from over the way.

The Grenade Officer is a cheery soul, but his habit of carrying samples of his wares in all his pockets will tend to discourage you from making him too faithful a friend. If you share a dug-out with him insist on him disrobing outside.

Whenever you travel anywhere by train you will bump up against the Railway Transport Officer. You will easily single him out, as he will always be the busiest-looking man in the station.



"Very sorry! Not a single sandbag in the place!" The Field Company Sapper Officer is a miser with his sandbags, and will only part with them under protest.

The Railway Transport Officer is the busiest man at the station, and will invariably greet you with: "Some other time, my dear sir; some other time!"

Bear this in mind—to be rude or disrespectful to an R.T.O. on his own platform, no matter what your rank may be, is worse than bonneting an Admiral on his own quarterdeck.

While at the base you will meet many officers of various magnitudes and dimensions engaged in sundry jobs, collected together under the heading of "Base Duties."

Make any of these gentlemen that you meet your friend for life, for "Base Duties" have a happy knack of knowing everyone and everything, and can ease your path considerably.

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The SWASHBUCKLER'S LADY

By Christine Jope-Slade.

"To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
To doubt her pureness were to want a heart."

I.

"Of course you think I'm out of my mind?" queried the Swashbuckler passionately.

"No; at the present moment I don't think you've got a mind at all."

Angry, youthful blue eyes blazed into calm, middle-aged grey ones; then suddenly the new-found manhood dropped from the Swashbuckler and he became a boy again.

"You're being pretty filthy to me about it all," he pleaded. "You don't know what I feel about it. You don't understand me—you're—you're——"

"Too old, Swash?" said the elder man quietly.

The boy nodded, shamefaced, but still resolute.

"You've forgotten——"

"Not at all. I remember when I was your age, just down from Cambridge, I would have given my very soul into the hands of one of these dancing women——"

"Why the deuce can't you call her a lady?" broke in the boy savagely. "Just because she—she dances for her living you sit up there and speak of her as if——" He brought his hand down on to the table beside him so hard that the signet-ring on his finger left a mark on the polished surface, and the blue bowl of white June roses spilt their petals. "Men don't give women a chance! Life isn't fair to women——"

"They all talk that way," the older man interrupted gravely, "and they have tears hanging on long eyelashes and their pretty, coloured mouths quiver." A look of ineffable tenderness, almost feminine in its intensity, swept across his mobile face. He laid a restraining hand on the khaki sleeve. "Swash," he said huskily, "I've brought you up from a kid."

"You've been frightfully good to me."

"It wasn't that, Swash—but—I couldn't let you marry this woman. They—they aren't the women we marry and make the mothers of our sons, Swash. You're only on the threshold of life—you haven't hit the trail. I couldn't stand by and see you noosed like a blind kitten."

"I'm going to marry Lulu, sir. We've made up our minds. I'm going to marry her before I go back to the Front. We fixed it between us. I'm twenty-one and I've a thousand a year of my own——"

"That's it! She knows that! Swash, old boy, for God's sake listen to reason!"

"She doesn't know it. She thinks I've nothing but my second-lieutenant's pay. She's going on working till I come back. She's great. She's got a little flat and an old mother who is going blind——"

"They all have, Swash."

"I've seen her. She's a topping old soul," protested the boy angrily. "When we're married we're going to take her to see Wade Behrens. He saw her eyes two years ago. Lulu saved up and took her. He said he could save her eyesight by an operation, but it would cost the dickens of a lot, nearly £140 with the nursing-home, and Lulu couldn't run to it; and Behrens isn't a free hospital man. Lulu's white all through." He lifted his pale young face like a knight hailing the vision of the Holy Grail.

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"She's the straightest, cleanest thing God ever made."

The man of the world felt the invisible sword in his hand, and because he loved the boy he was sick and shamed to lift it with the weight of knowledge that lay behind, but he had to, to cut this useless lumber from the boy's life, to sever him from the first evil that had crossed his path.

"It's your money she's after."

He thought the Swashbuckler would strike him. There was absolute hatred in the fierce, bright young eyes.

"It's an abominable lie!" the boy said thickly.

"If I—I could prove it, would you give her up, Swash?"

"You couldn't prove it."

He looked at the curly head on the broad young shoulders.

"I bet I could."

"I swear you couldn't! She's as true as steel—as honest as daylight——"

"Are you going to see her before you go back to Yorkshire?"

"No; she's rehearsing, and I catch the twelve-thirty."

"If on your return I could prove to you that she had been going round town with me——"

The boy laughed shortly. "Well?" he said fiercely, "well?"

"If I could prove to you that she had let me be her cavalier, let me help keep the old mother—would you give her up?"

The boy nodded triumphantly.

"I'm pretty safe," he said grimly.

"Will you promise not to write to her for—four days? That's all I ask."

"And supposing you fail—after I have given you a fair field for—for your good work?" the Swashbuckler flashed at him bitterly.

The man of the world hesitated; then he staked all on his little knowledge of life.

"If you still want to I will make no objections to your marrying the—lady."

The eyes of the boy, clear and bright and confident, looked into his; the quality that had earned him his nick-name at school and college was merged into a new purposefulness, a new strength.

II.

He sought her between the hours of the *matinée* and evening show.

He had never seen her on the stage. He had not even bothered to inquire of the Swashbuckler at what music-hall she made her appearance. He approached her, mentally, as he would have approached a piece of business; she was a proposition, not a woman; he excluded sex, soul, appearance, and personality subconsciously from all his thoughts of her, and sharpened all his weapons, caressed his nerves till they were cool and impersonal as white, drawn whip-cord to meet adequately what he conceived her type to be.

He had difficulty in finding her home; it lay behind Soho, in one of those mean streets that are peopled with dark faces and the smell of foreign foods and hair oils. In the mellow afternoon sunlight it had a fleeting, ragged picturesqueness.

The house where the Swashbuckler's lady lived was cleaner and older than the rest. Huddled by itself, shrinking away from the other houses, clustered together like whispering hags, it had a pathetic air of stately aloofness.

The Swashbuckler's lady had the top flat. His appraising eye met window-boxes rioting carelessly and flamboyantly with orange nasturtiums.

"Mrs. Greyson" was on the card stuck behind the bit of yellowing celluloid. It headed a list of foreign names.

He knocked on the sun-blistered door.

There was a scuttling, a faint murmur of voices; then it opened, and he found himself coolly appraising the Swashbuckler's lady.

She wore a grey *crêpe* kimono with white storks on it, and little beads of moisture glistened on her round, white neck and damped the rebellious curls that stuck out above her forehead like impertinent sparrow's wings.

"Miss Greyson?" he said.

She nodded easily, unabashed by the carelessness of her toilet.

Her eyes were very bright and brown and clear in her pale face, like brilliant pebbles seen through running water.

The little room behind her was full of rich amber sunshine, and she stood slimly and straightly against it, rounded, girlish, supple with youth.

"My name is Richardson," he said. "I came to see you on business."

"Please come in."

There was nothing of the practised siren in her clear, high young voice.

The amber of the room beyond engulfed him after the dimness of the passage. He blinked in it and found himself blinking at a pathetic little figure sitting by the open window, facing the theatrical red-heat of the sunset and staring at it with the wide, untroubled, unwinking gaze of a new baby.

"My mother," the girl explained. "Mother, a gentleman has come to see me about my work, a Mr. Richardson."

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"Won't you sit down?" said the old lady in her soft, tired voice.

The girl had an electric iron fixed on to the swing lamp above the small table in the centre of the room. She took the plug out and replaced the globe; then she put the iron on one side to cool and rolled up her ironing sheet.

"What is the time, dearie?" said the languid old voice that had been talking to Richardson.

The girl had put the little room to rights with a few deft touches. She shook out the orange chiffon ballet skirt she had been ironing and laid it, smouldering and glowing in the sun, over a chair-back before she answered.

"Nearly half-past six, dear; would you like your bonnet? Excuse me one minute," she said, and was gone, returning with a widow's bonnet and a little rosary in her hands. She tied the bonnet deftly underneath the kind, weak little chin.

"You will forgive my going?" the little woman said, and bade him good-bye; then very slowly she moved towards the door on her stick and passed out, the rosary clinking softly in her hands.

"The church is on this side," the girl explained. "She does not have to cross the road, and the people round here know that she is blind."

"Are you a Roman Catholic too?" he asked with cool curiosity.

"I am nothing," she said hardily. "I have no time."

He found her eyes upon him, large and questioning, with little will o'-the-wisp flickers of hard shrewdness and speculation flashing in them. He answered their unspoken inquiry.

"I have come to you with a purely business proposition, Miss Greyson. I require certain—services from you for which I am prepared to pay adequately. I do not wish to answer any unnecessary questions. I—imagine that you will see the ultimate drift of my requirements?"

Her thickly-fringed eyes were intent on him. She was leaning forward with her soft, childish face cupped in her hand; the attitude accentuated the youthful slimness of her.

"Please speak more frankly," she requested. "I don't understand you."

"Certainly." His eyes rested on her coldly and calculatingly, forgetful of her youth, her sex, remembering only her type, as revealed by the unsuspecting, infatuated Swashbuckler. "I wish you to let me take you about for this week. I will call for you after rehearsals and take you out to lunch. I will call for you after *matinées* and give you tea, and, if you will permit it, I will take you into the country on Sunday—and your mother. I ask you to be my guest for a few hours every day. I ask nothing that will offend your sense of decorum and propriety or any respect for convention that your mother——"

"Please leave my mother out of this," she interrupted. "Is that all?"

"Not quite." His voice was smooth. "At the end of the week I wish you to write me a little letter—using my Christian name (my name is Robert), thanking me, as cordially as you choose—the greater the cordiality the better it will serve my purpose—for the splendid time I gave you. I will endeavour, by the way, to make it as pleasant as possible."

"That is all you require from me?"

He nodded. He knew that her eyes were hating and despising him. He knew that he had only brushed a little of the brilliance from a butterfly's wing, and yet for one moment he had the unpleasant feeling of a sportsman who accidentally damages a song bird's plumage.

"Everything," he said.

"And it is from *me* you require these services?"

He nodded briefly. The question seemed of little import. She must see that he was paying her for the freedom of the enthralled Swashbuckler. She must know that, for a price, she was revealing her type to the Swashbuckler's blind eyes.

He was playing for the Swashbuckler's freedom. He was forty, but the Swashbuckler's easy, affectionate patronage had made him feel forty-five; the Swashbuckler's "sir" had intensified the consciousness of his few silver hairs and wrinkles.

He looked young, thirty-five at most, but the gallant, scatter-brained, whimsical Swashbuckler had robbed him of youth and overlaid the inherent boyishness that lies dormant in every man till he be sixty.

Sitting in the grey, twilight-shadowed room with the girl in the grey kimono he felt old and *blasé*, and he spoke in that spirit.

"Well, Miss Greyson?"

He realised how long they had both been sitting there motionless and was surprised.

"Are you prepared to pay me well for this favour?"

"Name your price," he said.

Her hand fluttered up to her slender throat and gripped it. Her mouth was a little open, like the soft, pale petals of a blossom fallen apart.

"Two hundred and fifty pounds," she said, and her voice was husky.

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"Name your price," he said. Her hand fluttered up to her slender throat. . . . "Two hundred and fifty pounds," she said, and her voice was husky.

For a second he was startled. He had expected anything up to a thousand. Behind the huskiness pulsed a terrible eagerness. There was a fierce anxiety in her eyes.

Two hundred and fifty pounds was better than a young man with no prospects perhaps; for a minute he was sick for the poor, deluded, idealising boy. He saw the slim, pale, girlish thing as a vampire.

He took out his cheque-book and his fountain pen. His heart was filled with cold, contemptuous dislike of her.

She accepted the cheque wordlessly. She nodded, seemingly rendered inarticulate by the little bit of paper, to his "good night." It struck him how great must be her need.

He left her sitting there, crumpled up, a small, grey, shadow figure in a twilight room, holding his cheque in her hand.

III.

He saw at once that the pathetic, sightless old mother was in ignorance of the transaction.

She spoke of the Swashbuckler's lady as Bundle, and he discovered that she had another daughter, also on the stage, referred to as Bits; a rarely tender and wonderful affection united the three.

Peace and harmony dwelt in that tiny flat in Soho, peace and harmony, tolerance and goodwill.

Bits he never saw and Bundle never spoke of her, but from the blind mother he learnt that she was engaged, and on tour in *Curly Kale and Kisses*, a revue, and from the old mother he learnt of her own passionate desire to see again.

"I want to see the sky and the flowers,

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and little children's faces," she told him. "I long to see how my girls have grown up. They were so pretty—so pretty. I never let them know. It would grieve their tender hearts, it costs so much money, and we have none. One day my girls will be famous—and then, if it is not too late——"

All this he learnt while he waited in the little sitting-room for Bundle to get ready to go out with him, for she was always late, always frantically busy when he arrived, always apologetic.

The days slipped by on magic wings, and yet he had time to lay his startled hands on youth, to feel it surging in his veins again, dancing along his nerves and pulses, quickening his heart.

He lived, blind as he had deemed the Swashbuckler to be, for the long, golden, sun-filled hours that he spent with Bundle, and at the close of the magic hours they would get into his car again and be whirled back to town, and the perky elfishness would drop from her and she would become the little London ballet dancer again, and he would try and despise her for what she was and what she had done, and find it impossible because of the tired, childish wistfulness of her white face beside him.

No word came from the Swashbuckler in Yorkshire.

Every morning he dreaded to see the characteristic writing. Every morning he heaved a sigh of relief. He knew that *Curly Kale and Kisses* was in Yorkshire for a week, but he could not bring himself to ask Lulu whether the Swashbuckler knew her sister. He could not bring himself to speak to her of the lad.

The wild, fresh, innocent charm of her, the youth, the rippling gaiety, the hours of nun-like peace and silence, when she stood alone with her white, young-girl thoughts mirrored in her eyes, left him a prey to doubt; her star-gazing silences made him feel a criminal, bungling, with clumsy experience, at the cob-web door of Happiness. He cursed himself for a fool, and later, in the candle light of his own luxurious dining-room, he cursed himself doubly for being taken in by a grey light and a handful of stars and the studied art of a girl on the stage.

The last day of their week he took her to Maidenhead; always, hitherto, she had been back in town early for the evening performance, but the revue was over and they were rehearsing a fresh show.

She had been rehearsing since ten, with only a surreptitious sandwich for sustenance, and she was white and fagged when he met her, in the car, at the stage door at five.

They sped through Hounslow and down the hot Bath Road almost in silence.

"I thought we'd dine at Skindle's and take a launch down the river for an hour," he said. "If we are back in town by ten, will that be too late for you?"

Her tired eyes shone through a mist of tears, her lips quivered.

"You are very kind," she said softly. "It was so hot there, so hot!" She gave a little, panting sigh.

He moved away and sat at the far end of the seat. She was so little, so appealing, with the glimmer of tears in her bright eyes. She leant back and drank in great draughts of country air. Never had she seemed so remote from him; then suddenly she opened her eyes wide. He saw the woman peering through the elf.

"You will find the letter you wished me to write at home when you get back," she said.

They dined almost in silence; at a near table a party of chorus girls and young officers made merry. It struck him suddenly how apart she was in type and mien.

When the willows that hide the gas-works shone faintly, like jade curtains in the dusk, they climbed into the launch he had hired and were silently spirited away, beyond voices, beyond people and the sound of wheels and cars and footsteps, into the rosy world where the sky and the water met in a pale flame of pink, where the shadows of the trees were like black lace scarves laid on coral, where the kingfisher, flashing through the rose world like a jewel, seemed the only living thing.

"How good it is!" she whispered. "How good!"

It was as if great invisible curtains had come down from heaven and shut them off from all that lay behind, leaving them to the great, rose heart of this great, rose world; and the figure of the old engineer in his blue jeans seemed as impersonal as the figure of Fate.

Stars came out and glimmered through the willows that tufted the Cookham bank like grey feathers.

"Turn," the man ordered a little sharply, and glanced at the small, still figure in the big, cushioned chair.

They hugged the side of the wide, dreaming meadows; figures wandered on it, lovers that looked like black shadows on a shadow fresco; moon daisies glimmered like stemless pearls floating on a tideless grey sea.

Young blood surged in his veins.

"The Swashbuckler's lady" seemed to sleep in her pillowed chair.

He did not speak until he gave her his hand at Skindle's landing-stage.

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The Swashbuckler, young, magnificent, brown as a berry, was wringing his hand. . . . . Bundle, white as paper, looked on. Her hands fluttered out appealingly. [*Page 48, col. 1.*]

"It was lovely," she said, and it sounded forced, almost sacrilegious, like the twanging of a banjo in a cathedral; it jarred them both.

On the way home they talked a little, like strangers in a train speaking for the first time; an immense constraint consumed and embarrassed them.

She had taken off her hat and it lay on the seat between them. The breeze ruffled the two odd little wisps of curly hair, making them stand upright like the impatient wings of an Ariel—and there was no to-morrow for either of them.

They had acquired the Swashbuckler's freedom.

To-morrow he would send the Swashbuckler this stage woman's letter, proving that she was not the ideal woman, proving she——

She had fallen asleep, and her slumber was a sweet thing to behold. He bent near the angel face of "the Swashbuckler's lady," and saw the sweetness and the delicacy of it through a mist.

He touched the warm, parted, flower-like lips with his. Then he sat back, white-faced, and quivering as if a mine had exploded behind the car, and watched the chauffeur eat up the grey road at forty miles an hour.

IV.

Dawn came and found him still sitting on the edge of his bed, his coat off, his waistcoat undone, the two letters spread out before him—the Swashbuckler's and the Swashbuckler's lady's.

She had given him his money's worth; he acknowledged that. She thanked him for the wonderful days they had had together. He was her "very dear, kind Robert." It was the knell of the Swashbuckler's belief and trust, most convincing revelation of her type and creed.

She had sold the Swashbuckler's impetuous, gallant young love for £250, and he had tempted her.

He turned to the Swashbuckler's letter.

The Swashbuckler begged his pardon in a dozen delightful, impetuous ways, but he adored Lulu and Lulu adored him, and life was just too perfectly marvellous—and so he was going to marry Lulu before he went to the Front. He expected to get leave, probably next day, and he'd come up to town and join his regiment at the station at the end of his twenty-four hours. His love blazed a trail through every page.

Lulu was worthy of the Swashbuckler. She had done an unworthy thing, yet she was worthy.

He would tear up Lulu's letter. He would go to her and tell her he hoped she would be happy with the lad; and the lad need never know.

He couldn't! His thoughts were flung into chaos again. He wouldn't give her into

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the Swashbuckler's strong young arms; no man who had been with her and known her sweetness and her youthful magnetism, could!

At nine he slept so soundly that his valet did not wake him. He woke at twelve to wrestle with himself again.

All day the fight went on, and when the sun was more gold and less hot, he ordered his car and set out for the little flat in Soho.

Lulu's letter was in ashes.

He would tell her that. He would tell her he hoped she would be happy with the lad. He felt old and dried up as he sped through the hot streets. like a man who has suffered a bad bout of fever.

The little street in which she lived seemed very hot and stifling; the nasturtiums wilted over the box.

He climbed the narrow stairs slowly, and hesitated a minute outside the familiar door.

She opened it to him, and started back.

"You!" she said, and stood there, in some frail pink and white muslin thing, clinging to the lintel of the door.

"Can I come in?" he said gravely. "I have something to say."

"Who is it, Bundle?" came the Swashbuckler's unmistakable voice.

He leant forward and gripped the girl's hot, bare wrist.

"I tore your letter up," he said. "I tried to play a filthy trick on you. I—I apologise. I want you to marry Swash, I——"

"Goo' Lord!" And the Swashbuckler, young, magnificent, brown as a berry, was wringing his hand, hugging him, pouring out affection, blasphemous emotionalism, and shy sentimentalism. "Dear old soul!"

Bundle, white as paper, looked on. Her hands fluttered out appealingly; he thought he understood why, when the Swashbuckler, incoherent, told his news.

"We're married! We came up together, and we were married by special licence. Come and meet her, dear old soul. I'm the happiest man——"

Dazed, he followed.

The little round table in the centre was laid for a meal. It boasted white roses and a little white wedding cake, and at the head of it, with the smile of a happy child on her sightless face, sat the little mother.

"This is Bits—that is Lulu. This is Robert Richardson, sweetheart. He brought me up ever since I was a kid."

He found himself looking into grey eyes, into a little face shaped like Bundle's, at the same childish, sweet pink mouth.

"I am so glad to meet you," he said, and his friendly sincerity banished the fear and apprehension in the little bride's eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Richardson," said the little blind mother tremulously, "such a wonderful, beautiful thing has happened. Bundle went to see Mr. Wade Behrens last night—and—he was so good, so good! He has agreed to operate on me and admit me to his home—free! He examined me to-day, and he says there is no reason why I should not regain my sight."

His eyes met Bundle's. She nodded assent. So that explained her anxiety for the money! That was where it had gone. She was speaking to him whisperingly.

"You said you were content to take the letter from me, to take me about," she was saying. "I saw that you thought I was Bits, that you did not know she had a sister. I hated and loathed you for thinking Bits was—like that. I thought it would be fun to pretend; and then you offered me money. I did not think Bits thought of marriage yet. I did not know until she walked in last night. I thought so many things might happen—possibly, if Swash went to the Front, you might never know at all—and mother——"

"I've got a week's leave. We're going touring in Devon. I've got my car," broke in the Swashbuckler.

"What is the time, dearie?" said the old lady.

"Nearly half-past six, mummie; would you like your bonnet?"

"We must go, dearest, too," said the Swashbuckler radiantly, and he took the little mother in his strong young arms and kissed her lovingly.

"My car is outside too," Robert Richardson told Bundle in a low voice; for one minute his eyes held hers.

"I took your money by fraud——" she began, but he stopped her gently.

They saw the bride and bridegroom into their car and the little mother on her way to Benediction; then Robert and Bundle fought their way through the crowd of curious youngsters to his car.

"Where to, sir?" said the chauffeur.

"To the world's end, Cobham, and back."

If the world ends where the moon rises and the stars are meshed in the swaying trees; if the world ends where the fields of moon daisies dream and the dew-drenched hedges scent the air; if the world ends where the nightingales sing; if the world ends when lips meet lips, when laughter and tears and dreams and hopes are mixed—then they reached the world's end that night; but I think all those things are signs of a world's beginning.

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DELIA.

(*An unrealised Ideal.*)

By E. L. Roberts.

Her figure is lissome and slender,
  Her cheeks are a delicate rose,
Her eyes (they are blue) can be roguish or tender—
  You couldn't describe them in prose.
She has dimples (a pair), and the curliest hair,
  She can coax like a practised coquette;
She is sweet and sincere, and no end of a dear . . .
  But I haven't discovered her yet!

Her wit is both pointed and polished—
  Should you argue with Delia, beware!
You will find all your fallacies neatly demolished,
  And dissolved in the thinnest of air.
She can cook, she can sew, she knows how to throw,
  She pays when she loses a bet;
She's a sport from her toes to the tip of her nose . . .
  But I haven't discovered her yet!

She's not at all languid or fragile;
  At golf she can drive like a man;
As a partner at tennis she's nippy and agile;
  At hockey she's right in the van.
From her head to her heels she is "fit," and at meals
  Her friends have no reason to fret;
And, finally, she has a weakness for me . . .
  But I haven't discovered her yet!

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The Wives of To-morrow

By Rosemary North.

Will the girl who has found an outlet for her energies in war-work find housewifely duties burdensome, or will she appreciate home and husband the more for her temporary plunge into business life? This is the question dealt with in the following article, which contends that, because of the war, the wives of to-morrow will be even more capable and understanding than those of to-day.

The girls who are doing their bit on the land are acquiring a resourcefulness and self-confidence which will prove invaluable in dealing with housewifely difficulties.

There are false prophets who say that, because a girl is wielding the spade to-day, she will be unable to manage a saucepan to-morrow; that because she is handling contracts and invoices, she will be unfit to cope with butcher's bills.

They are wrong. The girl who was domesticated before the war will not lose her skill at sewing and cake-making because she is learning to draw up balance-sheets, and the girl who did not know a frying-pan from a clothes-horse will not lose her capacity to learn just because she has learnt to distinguish between a sparking-plug and a carburettor.

The girls who are doing their bit either in the business world or in the direction of turnips and shell-making, are acquiring a resourcefulness and self-confidence which will prove invaluable in dealing with the difficulties that crop up in every housewife's career. They are coping with situations before which their grandmothers would have swooned gracefully away. They are learning to rise to emergencies, and she who has soothed irate clients or overcome the first terrors of milking reluctant cows, will not let a flue-brush or a sago pudding get the better of her.

Far from robbing a girl of those virtues she possessed in days of peace, the war has revealed in some damsels qualities they never knew they possessed. Take the case of Rita, one of the helpless, clinging girls now nearly as scarce as eiderdowns in the trenches.

Rita was engaged to a young shipping clerk, and because he earned only £3 a week, and her housekeeping abilities ended with lemon-sponge and embroidered tray-cloths, there was not the least prospect of their marrying for years. Rita insisted on a servant, and Herbert, who respected his digestion, could not but agree. Then the war broke out, and Herbert got himself into khaki, while Rita, who had once taken the skin off her mother's chest with a tropical poultice, offered her services confidently at the local hospital.

It took her exactly five minutes to find that, instead of fluttering round the best-looking patients with milk and beef-tea, she was expected to polish brasses and wipe up battalions of plates. Later she was set to help with the cooking, and discovered she could peel potatoes and beat up eggs without being cut off in the flower of her youth from nervous exhaustion. So that when Herbert came home on leave he found the servant question waived, and Rita prepared to marry him directly the war was over.

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Sago puddings and flue-brushes will have no terrors for the dauntless maiden who has successfully solved the problem of milking reluctant cows.

There are plenty of Ritas in England, girls who but for the war would be leading a butterfly existence, with no opportunity or desire to contribute to the sum of the world's usefulness. Now, even if they have not pledged their entire days to nursing, canteen work, or some kindred occupation, they are probably finding in their own homes some duties which are bringing out their latent talents. Servants have forsaken the kitchen for the munition factory, and many girls whose cooking was limited to cakes and toffee, are of necessity learning to deal worthily with joints and vegetables, and incidentally amassing a fund of experience that will stamp them as capable housewives in the days to come.

Moreover, they are learning to place the interests of others before their own, to serve instead of always accepting service, to refrain from pandering to their own desire for rest and recreation; they are finding their niches, and, for the most part, doing their best to fit into them.

Those who argue that, once having tasted the joys of independence, girls will shrink from the limitations of home-life, should remember that many girls have launched out, not so much from a wish to assert themselves, as from a purely womanly desire to help in "carrying on." Many of them have no special inclination to give up their home-life; they are inspired to it by a sense of duty, or, it may be, by the thought of the man they love, who is fighting that the home they hope to share may one day be theirs.

There are few girls who have not at heart a yearning for a home of their own — a yearning too deep to be quenched by the temporary delight of a latchkey and a weekly pay-envelope.

Granted that there is a certain monotony about domestic duties, surely the same drawback applies to the work of the average bachelor girl? And even if her duties are varied, they are carried out under certain restrictions, whereas the young wife can be a law unto herself as regards her work. Moreover, it is work sweetened by the fact that she is home-making for herself and her husband, and though she may at heart prefer typewriting to cooking, she will get more joy out of making a jam-roly for the man she loves than out of typing an agreement for an employer to whom she is more or less indifferent.

It is possible, too, that the girl who has been buffeted in the sometimes stormy seas of workaday life will appreciate the quiet haven of a home far more than if she had never had to fight her way into overcrowded trains and stand long hours in shop or factory. Certainly she will have more sympathy for her husband's business worries, and a clearer understanding of how to deal with a work-weary male than she could have gained in the sheltered paths of dusting and doing the flowers.

Memories of her own weary home-comings will lead her to refrain from hurling questions

The pretty young things who volunteer for service at the local hospital, soon discover that far more strenuous duties are expected of them than fluttering round the best-looking patients with milk and beef-tea.

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The wife of to-morrow will treasure nothing in life so much as the photograph of her husband in khaki, and the badge from the uniform he wore with so much honour.

at her husband the moment he enters the hall. She will understand the value of silence, and will not try to wring from him details of the latest war news or what he had for lunch, until, washed and slippered, he shows signs of feeling companionable. And if he occasionally endangers the life of the beefsteak pudding by being a trifle late, she will understand from experience that it is not always possible to "down tools" at the appointed hour, even though a devoted wife is awaiting the click of a latchkey amid the white paint and rosebud chintzes of Lavender Lodge.

There will be less snobbishness in the wives of to-morrow than in those of yesterday. The war, drawing all classes together by a magic bond of suffering and mutual effort, has stripped away the pretences, the tawdry show and convention of modern life. The wife of to-morrow will not pass Mrs. Brown in the street because her husband keeps a grocer's shop—"Quite a nice one, my dear, but still, a shop!"—it is conceivable she may even invite a new neighbour to tea before ascertaining if her establishment boasts fish-knives and forks, and whether she has her washing done at home.

Many a girl, who, on the strength of three servants and a motor-car, gave herself airs, has learnt a severe and much-needed lesson since the war. It may be that Clarence, her particular soldier pal, has failed to get his commission while a hitherto despised neighbour wears the coveted star on his sleeve. Wherefore Clarence is reluctantly compelled to salute, even though Angela is walking beside him with a threatening glare in her blue eyes. It only remains for the young officer to be accompanied by Angela's most hated rival, for that young lady's pride to be humbled in the dust.

Probably she will relieve her feelings by goading her pal into renewed efforts towards getting a commission, but she will think twice before she boasts about the chauffeur and under-housemaid to a girl whose *fiancé* may one day be in a position to shape the destiny of the redoubtable Clarence.

The war has shown women men's strength and latent heroism; we have, as it were, harked back to the stirring days of chivalry now that the flower of our manhood fights on the fields of Flanders, as it did in other days at Agincourt and Poitiers. The war has raised men in the eyes of their womenfolk; it has forged a new bond between them, a bond born of the anxious waiting on the part of the girl, the fortitude and courage of the man who took his life in his hands for her and England.

And this is bound to tell. It will tell in a happier home-life, in a greater unity of purpose, a more protective attitude on the part of the man, a deeper sense of dependence on the part of the girl. The wife of to-morrow will value her husband not because he can give her a piano or because he is a coming man in his profession, but because in the days that were he fought and endured for her sake.

And she will treasure nothing in life so much as the photograph of him in khaki and the badge and buttons from the uniform he wore with so much honour.

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A THRILLING STORY OF "DONOVAN OF DOWNING STREET."

Donovan, the hero of these splendid stories.

THE PRINCESS FÉO.

By William Le Queux.

Many and varied were the adventures of Donovan of Downing Street, King's Foreign Service Messenger. This story describes how, having obtained valuable information from an Austrian princess, he falls into the hands of the enemy, but finally escapes from his captors by a deed of extraordinary daring.

"She might very easily give you away, my dear fellow."

"Well—she certainly might."

"If you were discovered, she'd be compelled."

"Without a doubt. But women are extraordinarily clever and resourceful when the pinch comes. They have an intuition—a kind of presage of danger—that we men don't possess," declared Hugh Donovan, the clean-shaven cosmopolitan, who led such a changeful, eventful life carrying the official dispatches of His Majesty's Government hither and thither to its representatives abroad.

"My own opinion is that it's far too risky," declared his friend, Charlie Churston, who, in the uniform of a post-captain of His Majesty's Navy, was seated with him in his cosy room in Half Moon Street.

The summer's day was drawing to a close, and across the dark green carpet there streamed a ray of golden sunset. From dawn it had been a hard, strenuous day for Hugh. He had travelled home from Paris, a long, tedious journey in war-time, and arriving at the Foreign Office at three o'clock with dispatches from both Rome and Paris, he had been summoned immediately into the presence of Lord Chiddingford, the grave-faced Foreign Minister.

In that cold, official-looking room he had sat listening attentively to the difficult problem placed before him. He realised that certain information was urgently wanted, which, if obtained, would be of invaluable benefit to the cause of the Allies.

Afterwards Hugh had driven to his rooms in a taxi, and having had a bath to refresh himself after his journey, had rung up his old crony, Churston.

"I think the risk is far greater than you really ought to take, Hugh, old fellow," Churston declared. "Don't act rashly. Think it over for Mabel's sake. As your *fiancée* she has a right to a voice in the matter. Why not discuss it with her?"

"I can't. She's up in Scotland, and there's no time to go north. Her father, Sir Lionel Metcalfe, is up there, too."

"Well, do just as you please, old chap. I only hope the woman won't give you away," he said as he departed.

Hugh pressed the bell, and his tall, gaunt man, Bettinson, entered.

"I shall sleep to-night at Packington Street," said his master. "I may be leaving London again to-morrow. Has there been

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any message from Miss Metcalfe since I've been away? Let's see, when did I leave for Rome?"

"On the sixteenth, sir. You've been away ten days," replied his man. "Miss Metcalfe has rung me up two or three times to ask news of you. She rang up from Perth last evening, inquiring if you were back, and asking me to let her know by telephone as soon as you returned. Here is the number, sir."

And he handed his master a tiny square of paper torn from the memorandum-block beside the telephone instrument.

"Anybody on the alert just now?" inquired Hugh, referring to the constant surveillance which certain mysterious persons seemed to keep upon his movements whenever he was in London.

"I've not noticed anyone suspicious of late, sir."

When Bettinson had closed the door, Hugh crossed to the big bookcase, from which he took a large, locked portfolio. This he opened with a key, and having searched among a number of photographs he found one of boudoir size, a picture of a pretty young woman exquisitely dressed, whose face laughed out upon him.

It was a souvenir of past days, for across the picture was written in English in a bold but foreign hand:

"To Hugh Donovan, with best wishes
from Féodora."

He glanced at the pictured, laughing face for a long time as he stood there in the sunset. Then, drawing a long breath, he exclaimed:

"Féo! I wonder, I wonder if you still remember those days?"

Again he paused, his dark, serious eyes still fixed upon the photograph which he kept locked away from prying eyes.

"How strange it all was!" he murmured in a low tone to himself. "Ah! Féo, you never understood, but, after all, it was perhaps best for me that things happened as they did. I wonder if you still remember those delightful summer days when you and I wandered hand in hand together beside the Loire, those blissful days when we believed that our terrestrial paradise would last always? I wonder——"

The telephone-bell rang sharply, therefore he slipped the picture back into the portfolio and went to the instrument.

Two minutes later he was chatting merrily with Mabel at Alyth Castle, in Perthshire, where she and her father were members of a big house-party.

That same night, as Mr. Marvin, the cinema-operator, he busied himself in his photographic studio in Packington Street, that mean, drab thoroughfare off the Essex Road. His landlady, Mrs. Trayle, had welcomed him back again and had set his supper before him—a plate of cold beef and a bottle of ale—both of which he had consumed, for his palate was as cosmopolitan as his nature.

After his meal he took the message in Lord Chiddingford's handwriting and, placing it upon the screen, photographed it with a strange-looking camera, subsequently developing the negative very carefully. This done, he took a gold scarab ring from his pocket. Then he unlocked the cupboard containing his queer assortment of bottles and chemical apparatus, and, having put on a pair of rubber gloves, took out a tiny tube of yellow glass. This he uncorked, and from it withdrew a single pilule of what appeared to be some chalky substance, which he handled very carefully.

The golden scarab was about an inch in length, a replica of an ancient ring discovered in the ruins of the Temple of Abydos, in Upper Egypt, which had been given him by the late Sir Gaston Maspero, the greatest authority upon Egyptian antiques. He regarded it as his talisman, and either wore it or carried it in his pocket when it would have been too conspicuous upon his finger.

Taking a penknife from his pocket he inserted the blade in the head of the scarab, whereupon the effigy of the sacred beetle opened upon a hinge, disclosing a cavity, and into this he placed the tiny white pilule, closing down the back of the beetle with a snap.

Then he removed his gloves, replaced the little tube in the cupboard and re-locked it, remarking aloud to himself with a grin:

"Charlie is quite right! The journey is full of danger. Therefore it is perhaps best to be prepared for misfortune." And he placed the ring upon the little finger of his left hand.

Passing into his simple bedroom, a very different apartment to that well-furnished one in Half Moon Street, he opened a drawer, and after some search found an old ivory-handled pocket-knife, two blades of which were broken, and the other two in a sad state of repair.

Under the light he held it in his hand examining it, and then carried it back into the other room.

The next day Donovan of Downing Street and Captain Churston lunched together at the St. James' Club at a table in the corner by the window overlooking the traffic in Piccadilly, and there they laughed merrily

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together, for certain details had been arranged at the Admiralty half-an-hour before.

At three o'clock, as Hugh strolled back along Piccadilly with his old friend in the bright afternoon sunshine, Churston said:

"Tarrant has orders to await you off Margate. I sent him a wireless last night. He's on his way down from Harwich. I've left it all in his hands. The pinnace will wait for you at Margate Pier at nine to-night."

"Excellent! I shall be there."

"The bag is at the Charing Cross cloak-room. Here's the ticket," and from his cigarette-case the spruce naval officer produced a cloak-room ticket, which he handed to his friend.

"It is all complete," he added. "But I had an awful job to get it for you at such short notice."

"Never mind, so long as you've got it for me, old man," remarked Hugh.

"You're quite sure the woman won't give you away?" asked Charlie Churston, apparently still full of apprehension.

"Nothing is certain in this world," was Hugh's evasive reply.

"True; but women are funny creatures, you know, especially when nations are at war."

Five days later, on a glorious evening, a tall, smart Lieutenant of Uhlans was strolling along the Digue at Ostend, acknowledging the salutes of many grey-coated German soldiers who passed, and gazing aimlessly out upon the calm sea, crimson-tinted in the glorious afterglow.

"So far, so good!" he muttered to himself in English as, having passed the great glass-roofed Kursaal, once so gay in summer, he continued his walk in the direction of the Royal Palace.

Hugh Donovan—for it was he—had arrived in Belgium by way of Holland, but exactly by what means I am not here permitted to reveal. Suffice it to say that just before crossing the frontier he had assumed the uniform which he had found in the bag that had been deposited in the cloak-room at Charing Cross, and as he now strolled about Ostend his disguise was perfect.

He was noting the change that had come over the place. The great white hotels along the Digue were either German military headquarters or hospitals. Everywhere were defensive works, and in some places where the buildings had suffered from bombardment from the sea, gun emplacements had been constructed and heavy artillery placed ready for defence against the Allies' monitors, by which both Ostend and Zeebrugge were constantly harassed.

In perfect security he ate his dinner leisurely at the Couronne Restaurant, which, situated opposite the Central Station, was still open and crowded with officers, and then, at ten o'clock that night, he left by train for Brussels.

As he passed on to the platform the sentries saluted him, while civilian travellers, taking him to be one of the Hun conquerors, scowled at him in hatred.

On entering the railway carriage wherein were two Belgians, evidently business men, a third man, an undersized little person in black, also got in, and, seating himself in the corner, soon dropped off to sleep.

His presence there, however, caused Hugh considerable misgiving, for during his walk about Ostend he had met that man on two occasions, once on the Quai des Pêcheurs, and once in the Avenue de la Reine.

Was it possible that his movements had aroused suspicion?

The train roared on through the night. They had stopped at Alost, and were passing Laeken, close to the Gare du Nord at Brussels, when the little man in black sneezed loudly and apparently awoke.

Their gaze met. In the stranger's sharp, dark eyes, Hugh, shrewd and elusive that he was, distinctly read suspicion. Instantly his brain was at work to devise some plan by which to disarm the man's curiosity.

Five minutes later the train drew up at the Gare du Nord, whereupon Hugh swaggered out upon the platform, as became an officer of the Uhlans, and, addressing the *sous-chef*, exclaimed in German, in a commanding voice:

"I have eighteen men in the rear carriage on their way to Liège. Where is the transport officer's bureau?"

The *sous-chef*, who was a German in place of the Belgian who had occupied the post, saluted and directed him. He went out in that direction, but a few minutes later, in the darkness, he slipped across the Rue de Progrès, outside the station, over the canal bridge, and down a narrow dark turning into the Chausée d'Anvers, and so into the district of docks and wharves. Clever and resourceful, Hugh halted upon one of the quays down by a dark canal and drew a long breath.

"Gad!" he gasped. "That was a very near shave! That fellow, for some unaccountable reason, suspects me. It is, therefore, unwise to go to any hotel. And I can do nothing till morning."

At that moment there was indeed a reign of terror in Brussels. The principal streets

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and pleasant, tree-lined boulevards swarmed with spies. Brussels, before the war, a gay, prosperous little city, was beneath the thrall of a relentless and brutal invader, who arrested and imprisoned any person who did not cheer the Assassin of Europe and welcome his square-headed horde of ravishers and murderers.

Lighting a fresh cigarette, Hugh set forth to while away the time until the following day.

He found a café-concert called the Cigale, not far from the Theatre Flamand, and through the remainder of the night he sat there listening to the inane songs of German and Flemish variety artistes. Around him were many officers of the Army of Occupation, and with one or two of these he chatted, not one having the slightest suspicion that the good-looking Lieutenant of Uhlans was really an Englishman.

At that gay establishment the patrons were expected to sup and drink champagne with the artistes. So he sat at a *table-à-deux* with a pretty, dark-haired Flemish singer of questionable *chansons*, and they clinked their glasses of champagne, laughing merrily and chatting in French.

This dark-haired singer seemed to him quite a decent sort, and he was wondering whether he dare ask her to render him assistance.

Dawn came at last, but before she had changed her stage dress and it was time to go, Hugh had managed to discover a good deal concerning her. She had been born in Brussels but had lived in Liège when the Germans had come there. As she believed Hugh to be a German officer she, of course, naturally feared to express any hostile opinion concerning the conquerors of her country. She lived alone with an old servant in the Rue des Foulons, she explained.

Therefore Hugh very carefully approached her by explaining that he was away from the front before Ypres without permission from his commanding officer, and feared to be seen about the streets of Brussels in the daytime.

"I want to throw myself upon your good nature, mademoiselle, and ask you to hide me in your house," he whispered when nobody was near. "I know that I am German, but all Germans are not really bad, I assure you."

"But if you were discovered?" exclaimed the girl in hesitation.

"I shall not be discovered if mademoiselle conceals me," he laughed. "You can make some excuse to your maid. I only want to remain in Brussels a few days at most, and then I shall return to my regiment. Will you be a good Samaritan and help me?"

The girl looked at the tall, handsome Uhlan for a moment, and at last consented.

Having given him the number of her house she then hurried on in front of him, telling him to arrive in an hour's time. He presumed that his strangely-found hostess wished to prepare for him, a surmise which proved correct, for when he arrived at the humble but extremely clean little ground-floor flat, the old serving woman had the *café-au-lait* ready.

Truly, it was a new experience to be the honoured guest of such a Bohemian and painted little person as Mademoiselle Julie, who, at heart, was most generous in her erratic way.

That day he spent in her cheaply-furnished little salon lounging upon the couch and reading the German newspapers until, when darkness fell, he took her out to the Taverne Joseph, close to the Bourse, where they dined.

Afterwards she went back home to rest before going to the night-café, while Hugh, parting from her outside the Bourse, turned into the Rue Meaux and ascended those steep, crooked streets which lead to the Palais de Justice, outside which German sentries were pacing, and then continuing until he reached the Avenue Louise, that long, straight, wide-open thoroughfare with its lines of trees flanked by the houses of the wealthy.

A squadron of cavalry clattered past, and all was bustle and movement as he walked on in the shadow beneath the trees, now and then acknowledging salutes. He was preparing to throw the dice with Fate.

Suddenly he crossed to a big, white mansion set back from the road behind high ornamental railings with great gates of artistic ironwork. Against the latter was a sentry-box with a man standing motionless on guard.

Without hesitation Hugh passed within the gate, being saluted by the sentry, and went on to the door, where his ring was answered by a silk-stockinged flunkey in bright blue livery.

To this person he handed a plain visiting card upon which he had simply scribbled in pencil his name, "Hugh," and was then conducted to a small room on the ground floor.

Five minutes later the flunkey returned, saying in German:

"Her Imperial Highness will see you."

He led the visitor up a handsome flight of softly-carpeted stairs to a big white and gold salon upholstered in carnation pink, where,

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in the centre, stood a tall handsome woman, young and smiling, the original of the photograph signed "Féo."

"You — Hugh!" she gasped, rushing towards him and grasping his hand as soon as the long white doors were closed. "You — in Uhlan uniform! What does this mean?" she asked breathlessly.

"Well, Princess," he replied in a low voice, "it means—well—that I've risked a good deal in order to come here to see you."

"Does anyone know that you are in Brussels?"

"They know in London that I intended to come here. But in Brussels nobody has any suspicion."

"And they must not, Hugh," she said in eager apprehension. "If they had—then you know what would happen to you—eh?"

Hugh Donovan smiled significantly.

"They will know nothing," he said, looking at her very gravely. "That is, if—if you, Princess, are still my friend?"

The pretty young woman in the filmy pale-grey dinner-gown with the black ribbon-velvet at her throat gazed straight at him.

"Though I am politically your enemy, Hugh, yet how can I be your personal enemy after the sacrifice you once made for my sake? Do you remember that night at the Hofburg in Vienna—the night of the New Year's ball at Court? Do you remember those days at Salsburg, and afterwards beside the sea at San Remo?"

"No," he cried in a low, rather bitter tone. "Please don't recall them. Those days are dead. In three years there have been many changes. You have married."

"Married!" she cried. "Yes, and what has marriage brought to me?—only distress and unhappiness. The Emperor willed it, as you know, and I was the victim. Ah!" she added, with a strange look in her big eyes. "I only wish I had been born a commoner, and then I might have been happy—happy with you—Hugh!"

For a few moments both were silent.

Her Imperial Highness Princess Féodora Marie Elizabeth Luisa, niece of the old Emperor Francis-Joseph, and wife of the middle-aged old *roué* Frederick-Franz, Grand Duke of Oldenbourg-Lippe, looked straight into the face of her visitor, the smart, handsome Englishman whom she used to meet at Court and who was the confidential messenger of His Britannic Majesty.

At Vienna, in those peaceful days before her unfortunate marriage, Donovan of Downing Street was a frequent figure in the diplomatic circle, and she had been much attracted by his easy-going cosmopolitanism.

At that moment both were reflecting upon certain blissful incidents of the past. Both knew, however, that the past was dead, and only the present a stern and gaunt reality remained. For while her husband, the Grand Duke, lived in Germany, she preferred to live quietly there in Brussels, her own great castle of Bischofsberg, in the Tyrol, being too gloomy and lonely.

"Féo," he said at last—"if I may dare still to call you by that name—I have come to you at certain risk to myself. Indeed, I am the guest of a little café-concert singer whom most women would shun, a girl named Julie Soyez, who sings at the night-café, the Cigale. She is concealing me. I have come to Brussels to ask you to help me, and by so doing to help my country. You—a Hapsburg—are not really an enemy of Great Britain. Austria is but the catspaw of the War Lord."

"Yes," she said in a low, intense voice. "That is so. Austria and England have always been friends. Yet is it my duty to help you, Hugh?" she added very seriously.

"Let our friendship stand before the duty imposed by your uncle, the Emperor. Is it your duty to support the assassins who shot, in cold blood, seven hundred men, women, and little children in Dinant, or who massacred the inhabitants at Aerschot? Is it your duty to support those inhuman fiends of frightfulness?"

The Princess reflected a moment.

"No," she said. "You are quite right, Hugh. I will help you. How can I do so?"

They seated themselves, and Hugh continued:

"You have met my Chief, Lord Chiddingford? I have here a secret message from him."

Then, taking from his pocket the old broken pen-knife, he slid off the ivory from one side of its handle, disclosing a cavity in which reposed a tiny photograph. This he drew forth, and, crossing to a table whereon lay a big reading-glass, he handed both to the Princess.

She rose, and, standing beneath the light, examined the photograph through the big, square, silver-edged glass.

"Oh, yes!" she exclaimed. "I can read every word quite plainly. It is very ingenious of you, Hugh, to carry it in that manner."

Donovan smiled. "If I were caught with it upon me it would be rather damaging evidence," he said. "Now that you have read it you understand the information which is so eagerly desired from that quarter—a quarter that you alone, as an Imperial

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Princess, are able to approach. Let me destroy it."

And taking the little photograph he struck a vesta and applied the flame, afterwards casting it into the English fireplace.

"It means that I must go to Cologne and see the person indicated," slowly remarked the pretty woman before him. "For your sake, Hugh, I will willingly do it. I do not forget how much I was indebted to you in the long-ago days. To-day is Friday. I cannot possibly be back before Monday night. Let us meet on Tuesday."

"On Tuesday certainly, but I will not call here. I might be watched, and if so, I might compromise you. Let us meet in the Bois de la Cambre, at the north end of the lake," he suggested.

"Excellent! At five o'clock on Tuesday," replied her Highness. "By that time I hope to be able to tell you what you desire to know from the enemy's camp."

For another hour they sat together in that pretty room chatting over the half-forgotten past. Then, when Hugh rose to return to his place of concealment as guest of the little café-singer, the Princess said:

"Do be careful, Hugh, that you are not recognised. This place swarms with police spies."

"I will take every precaution, never fear," laughed the Honourable Hugh, and then, taking her white hand, he bent courteously and raised it to his lips, at the same time thanking her for promising to render his country such a great service.

Afterwards he turned upon his heel and left, while the Princess stood for a long time in the same attitude as when he had taken leave of her, pale, pensive, and motionless as a statue.

In Mademoiselle Julie's small apartment time hung heavily upon Donovan's hands. It was not wise to go out, therefore each night from ten o'clock—when the singer went out to her duties—till four he was alone reading the books which she brought in from time to time, and longing for the afternoon to arrive when he might keep the appointment with the Princess Féo.

Tuesday came at last, a warm, glorious day, and at four o'clock Hugh ventured to go forth, taking a tram from the Bourse up to the Bois, passing the Princess' big white mansion on the way.

Alighting at the gateway of the Bois, he swaggered along in the true Prussian style, passing along the broad gravelled drive that led through the delightfully shady wood with its many leafy avenues and by-ways, until at last he descended into the hollow where showed the winding stretch of water.

Then presently he saw before him, resting upon a seat, the neat, well-dressed figure of her Highness, holding a sunshade.

A few moments later he stood before her bending over her gloved hand, and being greeted with a sweet smile of welcome.

"I was compelled to go on to Coblenz, and only returned an hour ago!" she said. "I feared that I should not be able to keep the appointment." Then, as he seated himself at her side, she explained to him slowly, and with deliberation, all the knowledge she had obtained from a certain high official in the Kaiser's *entourage*, facts which would be of the highest importance to Great Britain when reported in Whitehall. Seated there in the summer sunshine Hugh Donovan heard from the Princess' lips things which staggered him, certain innermost secrets of the German Empire—secrets which only an Imperial Princess could have obtained.

To remain there too long would, Donovan realised, be indiscreet, therefore they rose and were about to part. Princess Féo was repeating her injunctions to Hugh to remain alert and wary until he got out of the enemy's camp, when they both started at hearing a voice exclaim in German:

"Your Highness! That man is fooling you! He is not a German officer. *He is an Englishman!*"

Both looked round. Hugh's heart stood still, for he recognised in the man who had thus openly denounced him the undersized little individual in black who had travelled with him from Ostend a few days before!

That moment was a highly dramatic one.

In a second, recognising the detective, her Highness recovered herself, and, smiling amusedly, said in a calm, sweet voice:

"I congratulate you, Herr Stimmel, upon your devotion to duty, but you are unfortunately quite wrong in your surmise. I think you will accept my assurance when I tell you this gentleman is an old personal friend of myself and my family, Count von Hausdorf. We were speaking in English, I admit."

"But, your Highness, we have been searching for this officer for several days past. His presence in Brussels was signalled from our friends in London."

"You need not have looked very far for Count Max. He is my guest. I expect the Englishman of whom you are in search somewhat resembles him."

These moments were full of tension. At first the man Stimmel was disinclined to believe the Princess, but as her Highness was a person of great influence with his superiors, and further, as his duty had been to keep surveillance upon her lest she

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Princess Feo was repeating her injunctions to Hugh . . . when they both started at hearing a voice exclaim in German: "Your Highness! That man is fooling you! He is not a German officer. *He is an Englishman!*"

be insulted by any hostile civilians, he at last allowed himself to be persuaded that he had made a mistake, and in the end apologised to Hugh for suspecting him.

When the police agent had gone, and the pair continued their walk, Hugh drew a long breath as he glanced at the gold scarab which he wore, and wherein was concealed the little pilule of poison in case of necessity.

'By Jove! I've never been nearer

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disaster than that!" he whispered. "I owe my life to you, Féo!"

"Never mind about that, Hugh. You must remain as my guest to-night, so as to bear out my statement, and to-morrow I must find some means by which you can get back across into Holland."

Two days passed. In the late afternoon a German commercial traveller, whose hair was iron-grey at the sides, whose face seemed worn and haggard, and who had with him a couple of well-battered leather bags, was on his way from Brussels towards the Dutch frontier by that line of railway which runs over the flat country through Turnhout, and thence across the frontier to Tilburg and through Nymegen.

For two hours or so the typical German, in rimless pince-nez, had sat alone in that second-class compartment, gazing idly out upon the passing landscape. Within himself he was dreading to approach the frontier, although his papers were all in order declaring him to be one of those shrewd business men known in the Fatherland as "agricultural explorers," or in plain language, commercial spies.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed to himself in English. "I had a devilish narrow squeak for it in the Bois de la Cambre! I never gave Féo credit for such pluck and ready excuse."

Scarcely had these words escaped Donovan's lips—for it was he—than the train ran into the big station of Turnhout, about six miles from the frontier.

Hardly had the train come to a standstill ere a bearded German in civilian clothes, who had three companions, opened the door announcing himself as an agent of police, and arrested him.

Protests were useless. Hugh was pulled unceremoniously out of the carriage and taken to the bureau of the assistant-station-master, where he was closely questioned. His papers were examined, but so entirely were they in order that the police officials held a whispered consultation.

"We had best telephone to Herr Stimmel," he heard one of the men remark in an undertone.

Then, after putting a long screw into the window from the outside, they left him, securely locking the door, and placing a man on guard on the platform outside.

That was about half-past five. Donovan knew that, in examining his bags the police would find samples of cutlery and scissors, for he was passing as the representative of a German firm at Solingen. Yet locked in that room, a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, he saw himself at a dead end. That mention of Stimmel easily showed how he had been watched, and he now scented serious danger. Princess Féo had done her best, but he had been followed.

The room was a bare office, a good-sized place, placarded with the war time-tables of the *Chemin-de-Fer Belge*. For a few moments he stood with knit brows, his ingenious brain working rapidly.

Suddenly crossing to the door, he closely examined the lock, afterwards listening intently.

"I wonder if I really dare?" he whispered to himself. "And yet—if I don't—I'm caught here like a rat in a trap."

Every second was now precious, for he knew that they were telephoning to the police headquarters in Brussels.

Suddenly he drew from within his hat his trusty Browning-pistol, a weapon that had many times stood him in good stead. Happily they had not yet searched him, therefore, placing its muzzle into the keyhole, he drew the trigger.

A loud explosion followed, while an instant later he threw his whole weight against the door, which, with its shattered lock, yielded, and he found himself free.

The detective placed on guard turned upon him instantly, whereupon he fired point-blank into the German's face, making a swift dash across the many railway lines, and down the embankment.

In a moment a hue and cry was raised.

For a quarter-of-an-hour or so he sped along swiftly, narrowly escaping recapture, but at last entering a barn he hid himself successfully in some straw, and not until early morning, when all was quiet, did he dare to venture forth again.

Then, after a six-mile tramp, he succeeded in slipping past the frontier guards in the darkness on the following night.

Three days later Hugh Donovan landed from the Dutch boat at Tilbury, and within a few hours sat in Whitehall relating the highly important state secrets which, by his intrepid courage, he had been able to obtain—facts which, indeed, a few days later gave us considerable advantage in Flanders.

Later that same night Hugh, alone in his room in Half Moon Street, stood beneath the light and gazed long and earnestly upon a photograph—the signed picture of the pretty woman of the blood-royal to whom Great Britain owed such a deep debt of gratitude and he owed his life—the Princess Féo.

(Another exciting adventure befalls "Donovan of Downing Street" next month, but once again he comes off with flying colours.)

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POINTS = = ABOUT PETS = = =

By Lesbia Robinson.

Disturbing Moments with Domestic Anima's. Illustrated by Leading Humorous Artists.

"A Rival in Her Affections"—Mr. Starr Wood's idea of how a lover regards the pet dog of his lady-love.

To some people a cat or dog is as necessary to the household as a rolling-pin or a door-mat; by others they are only tolerated as destroyers of mice and rats and convenient receptacles for scraps of food which would otherwise involve a journey to the dustbin.

Of course, kindness to animals may be overdone, and there are households which are practically ruled by the whims of a wheezy pug or the vagaries of a pedigree Persian.

Children's pets are perhaps the most trying of all, since their youthful owners are apt to be casual about their food, and do not usually display any undue anxiety over the housing problem. Either they leave their rabbits and white mice to the mercy of a long-suffering family or go to the other extreme and imperil their lives by excess of affection.

This was the case with Gertie, a solemn-faced child of seven, and the proud possessor of three goldfish whom she overfed consistently.

There was no greater mark of Gertie's esteem than to be presented to her scaly family, and wishing to give her mother's guests a treat on her At Home day, Gertie insisted on imperilling her clean white frock by conveying the goldfish into the drawing-room.

"Down with the Dachshund!"—the last moments of the dachshund whose master extends his animosity to dumb animals, tot'hingly depicted by Mr Alfred Leete.

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"An Emergency Exit"—Mr. Thomas Henry gives us the schoolboy whose pet mice are warranted to empty the drawing-room at a moment's notice.

All might have been well had she not surreptitiously fed them on expensive cakes, looted from the cake basket and dropped whole into the water. Caught in the act, she turned to fly, clasping the bowl in both hands, caught her foot against a chair, stumbled, and shot the astonished goldfish and about a pint of water into the lap of a satin-clad matron.

If she had been struck by a torpedo, the lady could not have been more irate, and she would probably have ground the innocent goldfish into fish paste beneath her heel, had not their agonised flapping prevented her from getting the range. As it was, a rescue party, consisting of Gertie alone, retrieved them from the real Wilton carpet, and their society career was at an end. Now, those counted worthy of an introduction are conducted to the nursery, but the satin-clad lady has evinced no desire to pursue the acquaintance!

If pets are sometimes trying they have their bright moments also, and occasionally prove invaluable allies in times of stress. This is what happened with Desmond, a frolicsome young Irish setter in whom was no guile.

His master, Captain Mayne-Chance, being stationed at a south coast watering-place, his young wife, Nita dwelt with the incorrigible Desmond, at an hotel hard by. Desmond, being Irish, had a way with him, and in spite of several skirmishes with waiters and chamber-maids, was undoubtedly popular. Only an impassive Brigadier, from whom the astute Captain hoped great things, failed to respond to the dog's boisterous overtures.

"An Innocent Victim"—Mr. Bert Thomas' warning to the trustful lady who imagines the streets are a safe place in which to give her dachshund an airing.

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His hostility became active when Desmond, breaking loose one night, had a field-day with the boots that stood outside the various doors, and made a hearty meal off the Brigadier's brown top-boots.

Next morning Captain Mayne-Chance wore a super-scowl, and even refused to be cajoled into playing with the dog, who was always especially sportive when bathing was on. Incensed at his master's refusal to join in his favourite game—that of rescuing him from imaginary drowning—Desmond sought entertainment elsewhere.

"Dog or Doormat?"—the unfortunate mistake of a young man intent on keeping in his rich aunt's good graces, portrayed by Mr. Reg. F. Smith.

It chanced that the Brigadier was bathing in solitary state not far away. Captain Mayne-Chance, who had seen him swim out a considerable distance, noticed him turn suddenly upon his back and float; the next moment he was petrified to behold Desmond making for him through the waves, evidently under the firm impression that he was drowning.

It was a very purple, but, strangely enough, far from irate Brigadier whom Desmond conducted ashore to an accompaniment of triumphant barks and tail-wagging.

"I really must apologise," began the Captain, racking his brain to find some excuse for the dog's enthusiasm in the matter of unnecessary life-saving. "I'm afraid——"

"But why should you apologise?" The great man's tones were benign in the extreme. "A most intelligent animal! He came in the nick of time. I haven't had such a bad turn of cramp for years. I just managed to float, but swimming was out of the question."

Captain Mayne-Chance is now in a fair way to exchange his three stars for a crown, and Desmond gives himself untold airs on account of a splendid, brass-studded collar which commemorates the day when, more by luck than good management, he saved a grateful Brigadier from drowning.

"An Inopportune Moment"—Esmond depicts the tactless parrot who chooses the moment when his master has fallen off the steps to become conversational.

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PICTURE PARAGRAPHS

The Editor will be Pleased to Purchase Photographs of an Interesting and Out-of-the-Way Nature. All Photographs should be Accompanied by a Short Description.

Photo *H. J. Shepstone.*

This lighthouse in Delaware Bay is a triumph of American engineering, being actually erected on a sandbank.

A LIGHTHOUSE BUILT ON A SANDBANK.

A DARING piece of work recently carried out by American lighthouse builders is the construction of a lighthouse on a sandbank. This structure marks a dangerous shoal, about twenty miles from land, in Delaware Bay. It is known among mariners as "Fourteen Foot Bank," from the depth of water flowing over it.

In order to secure a firm foundation to work upon, a huge iron caisson was built, launched, and towed out to the site, and there lowered. Apparently the great cylinder had settled down all right, when a sudden storm arose, necessitating the suspending of operations, and when the workmen appeared upon the scene the caisson had disappeared. However, it was eventually recovered and lowered again, but many anxious days passed before it was coaxed on to the desired spot.

After sinking it through the sand to a depth of thirty feet, a hard bottom was found, and additional rings were added as it disappeared, until the huge cylinder was nearly sixty feet in height. Into this deep cavity liquid concrete was poured, which set into a solid, circular rock as firm and free from vibration as a core of granite.

Upon this foundation the house for the light-keeper and the lantern were erected at a total cost of £25,000.

AN ITALIAN "STRONG MAN."

THE magnificent horsemanship of the Italian Army is a byword, but this "strong man" is not so universally known.

This individual is a private soldier, and is seen giving a demonstration of his strength by balancing, with apparent ease, five lusty comrades on a pole.

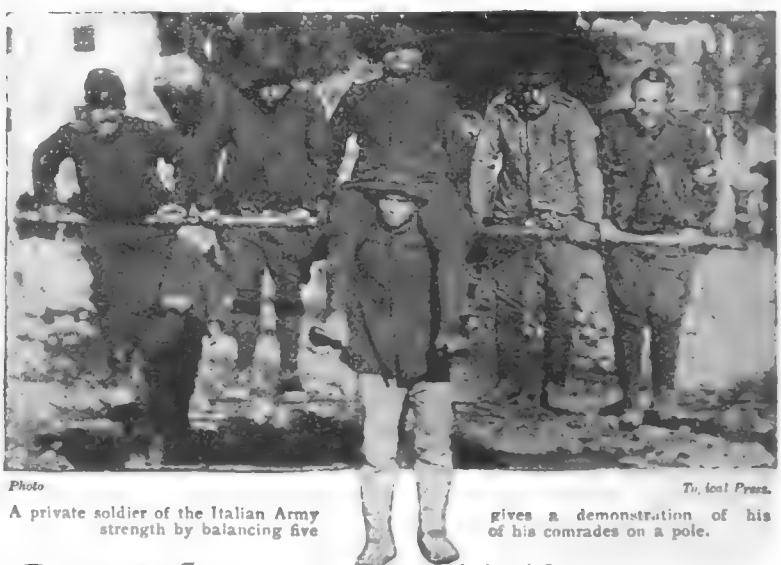

Photo *Topical Press.*

A private soldier of the Italian Army gives a demonstration of his strength by balancing five of his comrades on a pole.

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A "STAR" PERFORMER.

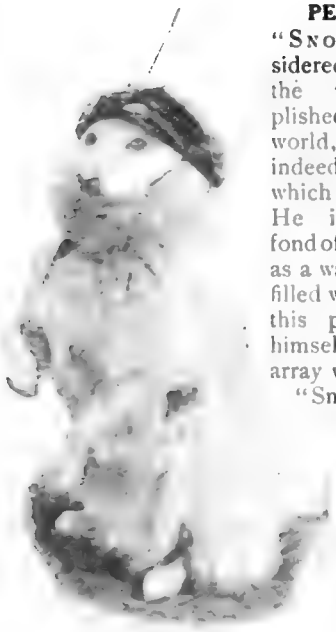

Photo D. Hughes.

"Snow" is undoubtedly one of the most accomplished dogs in the world, and has a large and varied *repertoire* of tricks. He is here seen arrayed as a warrior—one of his favourite *rôles*.

"Snow" is considered to be one of the most accomplished dogs in the world, and difficult indeed is the trick which is beyond him. He is particularly fond of masquerading as a warrior, and was filled with pride when this photograph of himself in martial array was taken.

"Snow" has never performed in public, but his private appearances before admiring audiences have been many, and he does not scorn domestic duties, for he has undertaken the daily task of wakening his master and taking up his letters. Also, when occasion arises, he acts as messenger, and his master feels no qualms about entrusting him with money, which he carries quite safely in his mouth. "Snow" knows every day of the week, and looks forward gleefully to the extra-special tit-bit always forthcoming on Saturdays.

A MAN-EATING SHARK.

This ferocious-looking head belonged to a man eating shark recently caught off the Jersey coast. The monster weighed 250 lbs., and was caught in a net and landed after a terrific struggle.

Photo Topical Press.

This fearsome object is the head of a monster man-eating shark recently captured off the Jersey coast. The shark weighed 250 lbs. when caught.

CANADA IN SURREY.

The 224th Canadian Forestry Battalion has been hard at it in the Surrey woods turning hundreds of splendid trees into wood to aid the war. The whole section of the country is a real Canadian scene in miniature, and a tree can be cut and turned into boards in about ten minutes.

Photo Central Press

The 224th Canadian Forestry Battalion has been busy in the Surrey woods cutting down trees to be used for war purposes, and these stacks of planks are some of the fruit of their labours.

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For Fighting Men Only!

MISS MABEL FUNSTON GIVES PRIZES TO SOLDIERS AND SAILORS.

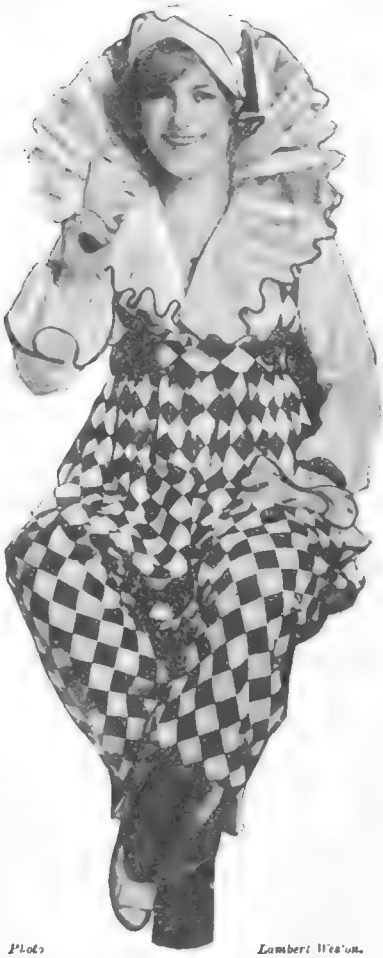

Photo *Lambert Weston.*

Miss Mabel Funston, the pretty young actress, with whom this competition originated.

Can you write a good love-letter? If so, now is your chance to distinguish yourself and win a prize into the bargain, for Miss Mabel Funston, the charming young actress who made such a hit in *Mr. Manhattan*, is offering splendid prizes for the best love-letter written to her by any soldier or sailor.

It happened like this. Miss Funston has received so many delightful letters from men serving in the Army and Navy, who have enjoyed her acting or perhaps seen her picture in the illustrated papers, that she felt she would like to do something for them in return. So she hit upon the idea of a competition for soldiers and sailors only, in which the prizes are chosen and presented entirely by her. Read Miss Funston's cheery little message on the opposite page, and I'm sure you'll all want to write her a love-letter forthwith.

A word about the prizes. Miss Funston is giving six wrist watches engraved with her name in facsimile of her own handwriting to the senders of the six love-letters which she considers the best. She will also give twelve leather letter-cases each containing a signed photograph of herself, to the twelve men whose letters come next in order of merit.

You can take it from me, these prizes are well worth having, for Miss Funston has chosen them herself, and scoured London to find gifts that—to use her own expression—are "worthy of our fighting men." The soldier or sailor who obtains one will be a much envied individual, for to win a prize presented by a popular young actress is an event that only comes once in a lifetime.

All men of our fighting forces are eligible, save only personal friends of Miss Funston. Letters should be not more than 500 words in length. Each letter should be accompanied by the coupon at the foot of this page and bear the sender's name and address in full. The Editor reserves the right to publish any of the letters should he so desire. Competitors who do not wish their names to appear in connection with their letters must state the fact when sending in their entries.

Entries must be addressed to The Editor, The Royal Magazine, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelopes marked "Cupid" in the top left-hand corner. They must reach this office not later than first post on Monday, January 29th, 1917.

"LOVE-LETTERS" COMPETITION.

(To be enclosed with entry.)

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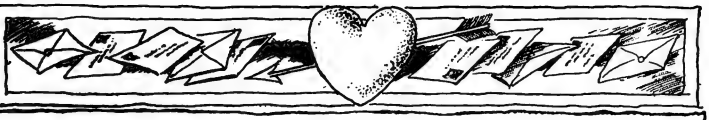

Dear Fighting Men,

You have been so wonderfully kind to me, and to my country women that I am hoping this little scheme I have thought out may give you some pleasure. - It's just a simple competition, & you'll find all the details on the opposite page. - Briefly it happened this way - I have been getting so many delightful humorous & pathetic love letters from fighting men - I have never seen that it struck me I'd like to start a competition & offer the prizes myself. The Editor of the Royal Magazine said he would help me - so if you feel inclined to try for one of my special prizes just look on the opposite page and fire away.

I wish you luck, all of you not only over this competition, but always in the bigger competition of life.

Mabel Lucie Attwell

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An Ally of the Wild

By Dorothy E. Paul.

"Nature is free to all, and none were foes
Till partial luxury began the strife."

The man from Back of Beyond pushed open the door of his shack, and standing on the threshold looked round expectantly.

But neither upon the upturned wooden box which served him as a table nor stuck between a crevice of the timbered walls was the letter he thought to see. The look of anticipation faded from his eyes, and was succeeded by a puzzled expression.

It was not that he had been positive a letter would be there. It was only the feeling that he was needed back in the settlement—a feeling which had become stronger during the last day or so—that had made him almost certain someone had ridden out with a message. Absurd to have thought so, of course—and there was no message. But the keen intuition that comes to the dwellers in isolated places was so strong upon him that, in spite of receiving no word, he was convinced all was not well in the settlement, and that he was wanted there. The kid was ill perhaps, or the little wife.

The winter sun, in a blaze of orange and crimson, sank behind a distant ridge of hills, and the mist of the horizon changed from violet to grey. Later, a cold November moon looked down upon a white world strangely figured and streaked with black shadows cast by the tall pine and fir trees, and it was then that the man from Back of Beyond pitched the first camp of his long journey to the settlement.

The way before him was rough and difficult. For four days and four nights he would be hidden within the dim recesses of a great forest, where the use of snow-shoes would be impracticable. For the sake of speed he travelled "light," taking with him only his gun, a blanket, and a few cooking utensils. Even then, at his quickest pace, he could not hope to reach his destination under eight days.

From among the wild dwellers in the dark forest he knew he would be able to get sufficient food to take him over the journey, for, although the prowlers and the feathered things of the wilderness were keen of scent, ear, and eye, the man from Back of Beyond was also quick of eye and ear. He, moreover, possessed patience and an unerring aim. Besides, it was only from the birds and smaller animals he sought his food; he would have no use for larger game.

The beginning of his second day's journey found him at the entrance of this forest, which stretched, dark and sinister, from end to end of the horizon. He plunged into it fearlessly and without hesitation, for he knew every foot of the way. Once a hare, scudding across his path, stopped for a moment to look back, with an inquisitive twitching of its sensitive nostrils, before it darted beneath the undergrowth. On one or two occasions the man, mindful of his evening meal, levelled his gun. But he was loth to break the silence with a jarring report and startle the dwellers of the wilderness into twittering uneasiness. He would wait until later, when he was encamping for the night. A hare or grouse would do; for the man from Back of Beyond never killed for the sake of killing. He knew and understood the ways of the wild things around him, and, save for the skulking wolf and the cruel, cold-eyed lynx, he had an affection for them all.

From where he lay on his empty stomach, screened from view by a cluster of stunted firs, an Indian watched the white man pass. A surging hatred stifled for a moment the pangs of hunger which gnawed at his vitals. His sharp eyes followed the traveller and rested enviously upon the gun.

To the human dwellers in the wilderness a gun means life. The Indian had no gun. Such a thing was the price of many pelts, and with the advent of the white man animal life became scarcer and very shy, so that,

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with his snares, the Indian was only able to get sufficient skins to enable him to procure the barest necessities. Never once had he been able to barter for the wonderful, shining thing which spat deadly fire and caused even the dreaded panther to stretch out and die. The Indian hated all the white men because he considered they were the means of scaring away the animals, and making life a still more difficult problem for him and others of his kind.

It was not that the pangs of hunger troubled him so much; he was too used to them. But last year, when his world was one of snow and ice, the thinning cheeks and sunken, wistful eyes of his squaw-bride had unnerved him. Then for the first time he had realised the bitter lot of his race. This year there was another mouth to feed in the wigwam by the frozen river, and there was nothing he could do to keep away the grim spectre of Famine ere winter passed.

He must have the gun which the Paleface carried. To beg, or to try and steal the meat which the other brought down would be futile as well as useless, for it would not be sufficient to keep hunger from those he loved.

Noiselessly he rose to his feet and peered with sharp eyes through the shadows of the forest whence the Paleface had gone. Then, swift and lithe as a panther, he followed in the trail, dropping flat and taking advantage of every bit of cover when he thought his presence suspected. Watching and waiting, never once losing sight of his victim, the red man played the great game of his race—the game of patience.

Meanwhile the man from Back of Beyond went on his way. When the rays of the setting sun stole faintly through the thick interlacing branches of the trees he shot a hare for his supper, and then began to search for a suitable camping place. The latter should preferably be in a clearing, for the man who travels the wilderness alone can rest easier at night when he knows he is not too closely surrounded by trees, from which the panther or the spiteful lynx can spring.

The glory of the sunset had quite faded before he found the kind of place he sought. But when he came upon it, it formed the stage for a drama of the wild.

A cow-moose was being attacked by a pair of lean, grey wolves, and it was on account of the terrified calf which cowered close to her side that the moose was perturbed. Alone she could easily have scattered her enemies, but the calf could not run quickly enough to escape their thirsting fangs nor could it defend itself, and while she had her attention turned upon one of the assailants the other would seize her young.

It was a perplexing situation, and while she confronted the snapping menace before her with ominously lowered head and watchful eyes, she tried to think of some way out of the difficulty. The calf pressed closer to her, and she found time to give it a caressing touch with her long, sensitive nose. The wolves, growing bolder, began a series of snapping charges. The moose became desperate, and in a bellowing roar gave vent to her distress.

The man from Back of Beyond was an interested spectator of the scene, and at the sound of the deep-throated cry he was stirred into action, all his heart going out to the moose in her plight.

"Two agin one, the skulkin' cowards he muttered. "That old cow's game; but I guess she's feelin' mighty queer."

He levelled his gun and fired. A wolf jerked convulsively into the air, then fell with a thud. Snorting with surprise, the moose saw the life-blood of her enemy stain the snow, then turned to charge at the remaining wolf. But he, deeming an unaided fight with an enraged cow too much of an undertaking, slunk away at his best speed into the forest. The moose snorted again, as though to reassure her calf.

She turned her massive head in the direction from whence the noise and the spirt of flame had come, and remained gazing curiously for a few moments; then she, too, with her calf close beside her, disappeared among the trees.

From his ambush the Indian had seen all that had taken place, and now with longing eyes he watched the white man prepare his camp. Soon the clearing was lit by the glow of a crackling fire, and presently the smell of cooking reached the watcher's nostrils. The hatred within him blazed up with double fury. He waited and watched for the fire to burn low, and for the white man to wrap himself in his blanket and lie down to sleep. But although he waited and watched until the cold November moon shed its white radiance around, the fire in the clearing did not die down and neither did the white man go to sleep. Instead, he piled more fuel upon the leaping flames, and sat up all through the night, very wide awake indeed.

As a matter of fact, the man from Back of Beyond had, during the past hour or two, become aware that he was being followed, and he was conscious that he was being watched, but by whom or what he did not know. A sense of impending danger kept him on the alert, and so, with the gun across his knees, he sat up all through the night,

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while the eyes of the watcher and watched played hide-and-seek in the blackness beyond the fire.

At the first streak of daylight the white man rose, and, after making a hurried breakfast, prepared to resume his journey. With the daylight he was inclined to laugh at himself for his uneasiness of the night before. Anyhow, he reflected, he was a match for man or beast in the daytime; it is only at night that the foolish eyes of man are at a disadvantage with those of the animals. Fastening on his pack, he left the clearing and plunged once more into the uncertain light of the dew-laden forest.

It was not until past noon that the man from Back of Beyond again felt that uneasy sensation which warned him he was being followed. Quickly he wheeled round, but, save for the eternal pine and fir trees, spruce, juniper, and hemlock, nothing met his eyes. He proceeded for another hundred yards with apparent unconcern, then, with a light spring, jumped behind a thick clump of bushes, while a row of stunted firs afforded him protection in the rear. It was an ambush from which he could see without being seen.

A long time he waited and watched, straining his ears to catch the slightest sound. But he got no inkling of what pursued him or where it lay concealed.

Quick as his action had been, it had not escaped the eyes of the Indian, who, smiling grimly to himself, waited patiently until the Paleface should emerge from cover and resume his way.

Chilled by inaction, impatient with himself for his uneasiness, and chafing at the delay, the man from Back of Beyond came at last from his hiding-place. He stepped forward, walking very quickly to make up for the time he had lost. Occasionally, with gun levelled, he would wheel round sharply, hoping by this means to surprise his follower before he could take cover, but always without success.

His uneasiness was fast turning to anger, and he was also curious to know whether he was being tracked by a man or beast. He knew that, so far in the wilderness, there were Indians of wild, nomad life who, in times of stress, would not hesitate to rob and even kill, and who, like the panther, would track a man for days without being detected. Also the cold-eyed lynx, noiseless and ghost-like, by taking cover behind every bush and darting with incredible rapidity from tree to tree, would remain invisible until it sprang upon its victim. But whether Indian, panther, or lynx, either were dangerous when Famine stalked abroad in its snow-clad kingdom.

With the coming of the twilight the man from Back of Beyond wondered what he should do. If the haunter of his footsteps were an animal, then the flames of a camp-fire would keep it at a safe distance; but if he had an Indian to deal with, then, without a fire, he would match the keenness of his own eyes against those of the red man, and doubtless, with the darkness, the latter would abandon some of his caution and come within gun-range. Two more days and nights in the forest lay before him, and he knew he would never shake off this lurking foe nor leave the forest alive until it had been reckoned with.

Wary, vigilant, and careful, he pushed forward. But he was not unmindful of his supper, for he must have food if he was to maintain his strength and wits to match them against his furtive adversary. Before the darkness came he shot another hare, and, building a fire, gave the meat a hurried roast, eating it there and then. Afterwards he scattered the embers and set off again. He walked with the step of a man who has a certain destination in his mind, and who is sure of the way, and at last he came out upon the shores of a small lake.

It was very cold; a bitter wind soughed drearily round the borders of the frozen water. But love takes no head of climatic conditions, and so, from time to time, out from the darkness of the forest on the opposite shore, came the bellowing cry of a bull-moose calling his mate.

The man from the Back of Beyond listened to the sound for a minute or two; then, becoming numbed with the wind, he began to prepare his camp and set his pack right on the edge of the shore, with the frozen lake at his rear. As his position was one of vantage, he decided to build a fire, for nothing could approach him unheard over the ice nor come within the zone of the firelight unseen.

He took the precautions that any man would take, because he longed to get back to the settlement where he was needed by those who loved him, and very dearly would he sell his life if an attack were made upon it.

Gun in hand, he went up the shore from the water's edge in search of fuel. When he reached the darkness of the trees, he stopped suddenly, standing rigid, with every nerve taut. The moment had come at last, but not quite in the way he had expected—or hoped. He met the watching eyes of the Indian—still eyes, unblinking and cruel as a panther's—and caught the flash of the knife held in a sinuous, brown hand; but he also saw looming out of the darkness, but a few

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Before the bear could deem discretion the better part of valour or could get in one sweep of his redoubtable paw, the iron hoofs of the moose were hammering about him, raining down death dealing blows with awful rapidity. [*Page 72, col. 1.*]

feet away, its small eyes glowing with a wicked red light, the form of a large black bear, who had evidently been disturbed from his winter sleep.

The realisation of the double danger held the man from Back of Beyond in a frozen grip, and it flashed into his mind that only one barrel of his gun was loaded. In the breathless stillness it seemed that his foes were waiting for him to act. Which should he deal with first? If he fired at the Indian, before he could swing round to attack with

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the butt end of his gun, the mighty paws of the bear would have knocked him senseless. Should he attack the animal first, then the Indian would seize the opportunity to thrust the knife between his shoulders.

In his despair the man from Back of Beyond cast an appealing look skywards.

At that moment there rang out again the passionate cry of the bull-moose from across the lake. This time his call was answered, and, with a loud crashing of branches at the rear of the bear, the cow-moose came in sight.

In what seemed an hour of doubt and fear to the white man, but which was in reality but a second, the cow surveyed the situation and seemed to understand it. Eager as she was to obey the love summons of her mate, there were matters nearer at hand which needed her attention.

Perhaps she remembered her own little drama of the night before, and the part the man-thing had played in it. Or maybe it was the hated, pungent odour of the black bear which infuriated her. The wrath of the cow moose was great, whatever the cause. She lowered her head and charged, thundering down like a battering-ram upon her enemy.

Before the bear could deem discretion the better part of valour or could get in one sweep of his redoubtable paw, the iron hoofs of the moose were hammering about him, raining down death-dealing blows with awful rapidity.

As the ribs of the black bear crashed in, the man from Back of Beyond wheeled round with gun levelled to face his other enemy.

But there was something in the Indian's face which stopped him from firing.

"*Bear's meat!*"

Those were the half-strangled words he heard, and in the eyes which glared past him there was now no murderous look—only one of frenzied hope.

The man from Back of Beyond understood. He lowered his gun. Then the Indian met his eyes, and the two stood staring at one another.

A smile, half pity, half contempt, flickered at the corners of the white man's mouth. He jerked a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the shattered, battered form of the bear, which the moose, now joining her mate, had left.

"Git!" he said.

When later, in the settlement, one hand held fast in the fevered clutch of five little fingers, the man from Back of Beyond told his tale, his wife slipped her hand into his disengaged one.

"Billy kept callin' for you," she said. "I was a'most crazy, not knowing what to do, and havin' no way of sendin' for you. So I jest kept thinkin' and thinkin' about it. Then I opened the window; there was a flight of ducks passin' overhead. P'raps 'twas silly, but I called out to them, 'cause I thought maybe they, or the wind, would kind of take the message to you. I felt easier after that. I sort of knew you'd come. But oh!"—her hand clasped his tighter—"you was up against odds, Dan!"

"Reckon I weren't the only one neither!" replied the man from Back of Beyond, smiling a trifle grimly as he thought of the Indian.

But the woman's mind turned to the cow-moose defending her young.

"No," she said, "an' I guess there's nothin' breathin' wouldn't put up *some* kind of a fight—for a little 'un!"

She looked down upon the touzled head on the pillow with a gentle smile of understanding mother-love.

"*SEND US THE 'ROYAL'!*"

"*I need not tell you how fond of the ROYAL we are out here, and we certainly do revel in your theatrical features.*"

This is only one of the many appreciative comments of the fighting men who look to the ROYAL to cheer up their dull moments, and to you to see that they get it.

Your part is so simple. Just hand as many copies of the ROYAL as you can collect over the counter at any post-office. They must be clean and in good condition, but without wrapping of any kind. They cannot be sent to any particular soldier or sailor, but will be distributed among the troops to the very best advantage.

"*Tommy's*" *leisure is often of the spasmodic order, and that's why short stories and brief, breezy articles are the very thing for him. He will fight twice as well if he is in good spirits, so—well, it's up to you, isn't it?*

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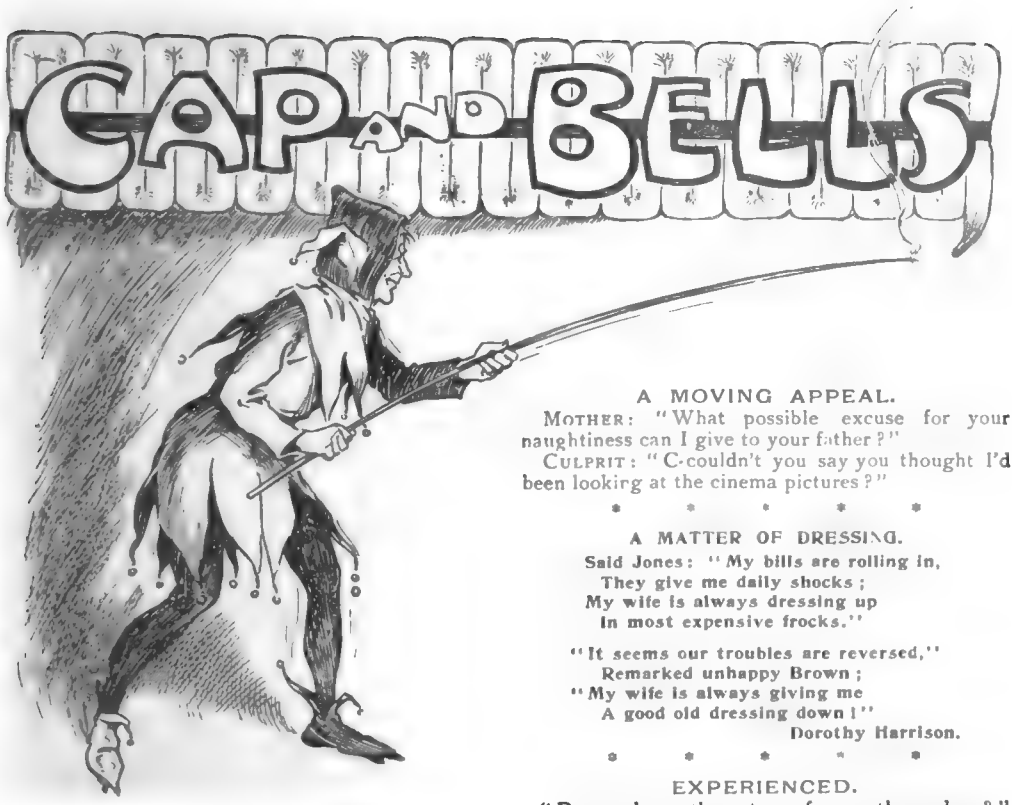
CAP AND BELLS



A MOVING APPEAL.

MOTHER: "What possible excuse for your naughtiness can I give to your father?"

CULPRIT: "C-couldn't you say you thought I'd been looking at the cinema pictures?"

* * * * *

A MATTER OF DRESSING.

Said Jones: "My bills are rolling in,
They give me daily shocks;
My wife is always dressing up
In most expensive frocks."

"It seems our troubles are reversed,"
Remarked unhappy Brown;
"My wife is always giving me
A good old dressing down!"

Dorothy Harrison.

* * * * *

EXPERIENCED.

"Do you know the nature of an oath, madam?"

"Well, I ought to, sir. We've just moved and my husband has been laying the carpets."

QUITE DIFFERENT.

A few months ago a lady engaged a new servant, and having views on the question of "followers," she expounded them to the girl upon her arrival.

"Mind you, Jane," she added seriously, "I will have no loafers about the place. You quite understand?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Jane.

Within the short period of a week, however, the lady had grounds for suspecting that her orders had been disobeyed, and Jane was promptly interrogated.

"Did I not make it a stipulation of your engagement that no followers were to be allowed?"

"No, ma'am. You said 'loafers.'"

"Well, you may have it that way if you wish. You were talking to a man for ten minutes at the area gate last night."

"Yes, ma'am. That's my chap!" said Jane unblushingly.

"How dare you disobey my express orders in this way?"

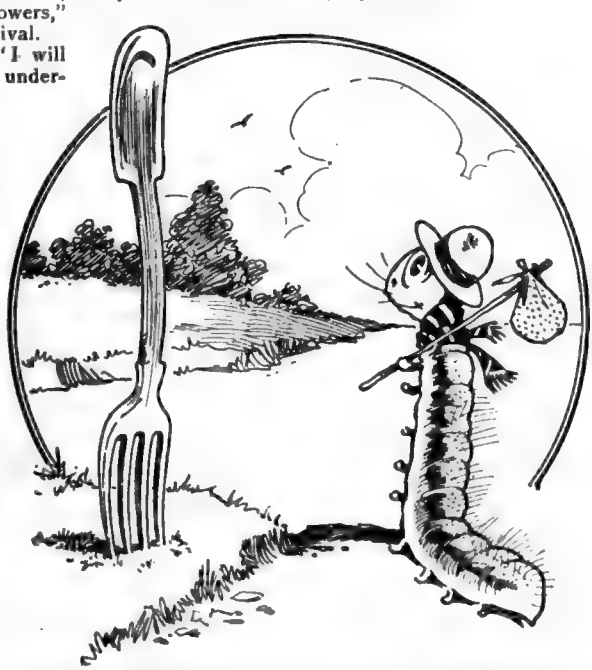
"I ain't disobeyed 'em, ma'am!" persisted Jane. "George—that's my young man—is a baker sure enough, but 'e ain't a loafer. 'E's a biscuit hand, 'e is."

* * * *

THE MOTOR FIEND.

SHE: "I see you've got your spurs on."

EX-MOTORING ENTHUSIAST (now a cavalry officer): "Yes, we use them to stick in the horses when we want them to—er—change speed!"



CHARLIE CATERPILLAR: "Let's see, I was told to turn to the right when I came to a fork in the road"

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THE TRAGEDY.

KIND OLD MAN: "Well, my little man, what is the matter?"

BOY (crying): "Boo—me farver's pinched fer stealing—boo—an' me muvver's got small-pox—bo—o—an' I ain't had no brekfus—an'—an'——"

KIND OLD MAN: "Dear, dear, how dreadful!"

BOY: "An' I ain't got no money to go ter the pickshers."

* *

HELPING HIM OUT.

When young Allan MacGregor met pretty Annie MacTavish with a big, new bandage round her hand he was greatly distressed.

"What's the matter wi' yer han', Annie?" he inquired tenderly.

"I chopped a wee bit off my little finger, Allan. But it's no so serious."

Now, Allan was badly in love, but too shy to say so.

"Oh, Annie, I am wishin' I had that wee bit to keep!" he said, blushing furiously.

"Would ye no raither hae the bit that's left, Allan?"

And Allan thought he would.

* *

"BY-THE-BYE—"

"How's yer wheat?"

"First rate."

"Pigs doin' well?"

"Fine."

"That puny colt come round all right?"

"He certainly did."

"Glad to hear things is so likely, Bill. How's yer wife?"

* *

ENOUGH FOR HIS PURPOSE.

GAMEKEEPER (to small boy whom he had caught bird-nesting): "Noo, I'm jist gaun to gi'e ye a richt guid lickin'."

SMALL BOY (tremblingly): "Please, sir, dinna lick me. Folk say I'm no a' there."

GAMEKEEPER: "Weel, I canna help that. I'll jist lick whit there is o' ye."

"It's all very well for the Capt'in to say that I'm growin' a bit stout—it's his bloomin' trenches are too narrer."

STRATEGY.

MRS. EXE: "You always have such wonderful success in getting people to come to your parties."

MRS. WYE: "Yes; I always tell the men that it's not to be a dress-up affair, and the women that it is."

* *

A PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

ROOK: "Taylor was always a fortunate man, but doesn't it seem wonderful that his luck should stay with him to the very last?"

RALEIGH: "How was that?"

ROOK: "Why, he was operated on for the removal of a pearl which he had accidentally swallowed while eating oysters, and when the pearl was examined it was found to be valuable enough to pay for both the operation and the funeral."

* *

THE GUEST OF HONOUR.

Mr. Goodfellow had dined out six nights in succession. On the seventh he turned up at home for the evening meal.

When he was seated Mrs. Goodfellow rose in her chair, and addressing the other occupants of the table, said:

"Children, we have with us to-night a guest of whom you have all heard, even if you do not personally know him. He is a man who has a reputation for conviviality and cheer in every club and café in the city, and this evening we are to have the honour and pleasure of being numbered among the admirers of his brilliant and entertaining qualities. Therefore, it is with the greatest pleasure that I present to you—your papa!"

* *

CONCISE.

"Ah! I see you wear glasses—what were you in civil life?"

"Short-sighted, Sir!"

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ODDS BODIKINS!

"You look very sad, little boy," said the o'd lady. "Can I be of any help to you?"

The little boy, who had been reading stories of the kind usually found in the "penny dreadfuls," struck an attitude and exclaimed:

"Hist, old woman! Thou canst be of signal service to me, an thou wilt. See'st yon tobaccy shop across the way? Take this bronze coin, and bid the scurvy knave within supply thee with two cigarettes and a match! Be secret, mother, and betray me not, or thy life shall pay the forfeit! I will await thee here. Begone!"

* * *

A MIRACLE.

Smooth and pink was the upper lip of Private Smith as he made his appearance on the parade ground.

"Where the deuce is your moustache?" yelled the Sergeant, in tones that gave one the idea that he was annoyed.

"Please, S-sergeant," stammered Smith, "I shaved it off this morning."

"What?" howled his superior, bristling with rage. "Shaved it off, did yer? Well, hif yer hain't got it on agin by dinner-time I'll 'ave yer up before the Captain!"

* * * * *

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOUR!

Willie was in a bad temper. His mother had just discovered that there was not a clean nightshirt ready for him to wear.

"Never mind, sonny," she said consolingly. "You will have to put on one of your sister's nightgowns to-night."

"What, a girl's?" snorted Willie, drawing himself up haughtily.

"Yes. Why not?" asked mother, in surprise.

"I won't wear it!" declared the small boy. "I'd rather go to bed raw!"

* *

THE IDEA!

DORA: "Fancy, mother, I'm engaged."

MOTHER: "But, dear child, you are entirely too young to be thinking of marriage."

DORA: "Why, mother, who said anything about marriage?"

* * * * *

UNMANNERLY CREATURES.

Meeting an old angler, a stranger said: "How are the fish in these parts?"

"Well," replied the old man grimly, "I really don't know. I dropped them a line every day last week, but I've got no reply yet."

HE: "Am I the first man you ever loved?"
SHE: "Yes, dear. The others were civilians."

SOLE PROPRIETORS.

The famous botanist was pacing slowly along the country road, his eyes, as usual, roaming from side to side in search of new plants.

Suddenly an eager look swept across his features, and he leant over the low fence enclosing a cottage garden. He had found a plant he did not know.

What could it be? If only he had a specimen of it to study!

At that moment a shock-headed lad strolled along the road and stopped to gaze open-mouthed at him.

"I say," called the botanist urgently. "See that plant there—that pale pink one in the corner? Do you know it?"

"Yes!" said the country boy briefly.

"What's its name? Do you know what family it belongs to?"

The lad jerked a grubby thumb over his shoulder toward the little cottage, as he spoke more briefly still.

"'Igginses!"

* * * * *

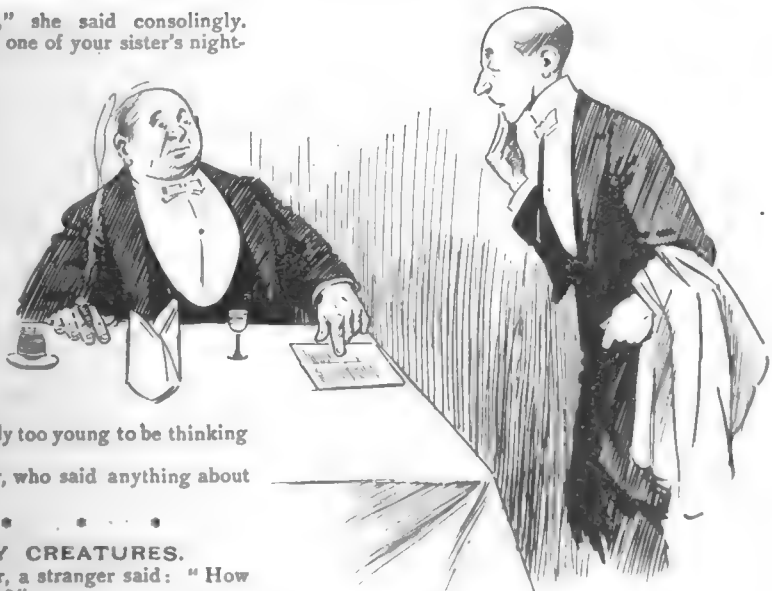
HIS CONDUCT EXPLAINED.

"Look here, my friend, what on earth are you waiting for? You have been standing here for an hour in the pouring rain."

"I am waiting for a 'bus."

"But at least five have just gone by."

"Yes, but not the one with the pretty conductor."



GENTLEMAN (whose French is somewhat shaky): "Bring me some of that."
WAITER: "Sorry, sir, the band's just playing it."

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UNKIND!

FIRST RECRUIT "What do you think of the major, Bill?"

SECOND RECRUIT "'E's a changeable kind of bloke. Last night I says to 'im: 'Oo goes there?' And 'e says: 'Friend.' An' to-day 'e 'ardly knows me."

A PRACTISED HAND.

MANAGER: "Could you do the landlord in 'The Lady of Lyons'?'

ACTOR: "Well, I should say so! I've done a good many."

OF BENEFIT TO BOTH.

"I took a long walk yesterday," said Boreman, as he collapsed into a seat at Busyman's desk.

"Take another, old man," suggested Busyman; "it'll do us both good."

THE IMPERFECT AIR.

"So your airship was wrecked in the blizzard. I thought you considered it perfect?"

"The airship was perfect," replied the inventor stiffly. "The air was at fault."

TWO INTO ONE WON'T GO.

But we've occasionally known them to—in the season when unripe fruit is about!

THE PRICE OF FAME.

MR. NEWLY RICH: "This catalogue's an absolute swindle; there are no prices in it."

MRS. NEWLY RICH: "What! You weren't thinking of buying any?"

MR. NEWLY RICH: "Certainly not, but how can you be expected to appreciate pictures if you don't know the prices of them?"

GAME FOR ANYTHING.

SOLDIER: "Do I mind where we grub? My dear Uncle, I ate a refreshment room bun on my way up!"

SPOILING HIS PLEASURE.

The young Scot never liked his mother-in-law, and this weighed heavily on the mind of his wife, who was ill. Calling her husband to the bedside, she said to him: "Sandy, lad, I'm verra ill, and I think I'm aboot to dee, and before I dee I want you to gie me a promise."

"I'll promise," replied Sandy. "What is it?"

"Weel, I ken that when I dee I'll hae a fine funeral, and I want ye to ride up in front in a carriage wi' ma mither."

"Weel," responded Sandy sadly, "I've gied ye my word, an' it's nae me that'll gang back on that, but I'll tell ye one thing, ye've spoilt the day for me."

* * * * *

DISAPPOINTING.

"Why do ye look so sorrowful, Dennis?"

"I just hear-r-d wan man call another a liar, and the man that was called a liar said the other man would have to apologise, or there would be a fight."

"And why should that make you look so sad?"

"The other man apologised!"

* * * *

A SAD TALE.

When Dick was introduced to Pearl,
He thought her quite a striking girl.
But now they're wed, when cross with Dick,
She will produce a fearsome stick.
He sighs: "I thought her at first sight
A striking girl—and I was right!"

Elsie Skeet.

* *

WELL TRAINED.

"Easy matter to pick out the single and the married," observed the recruiting officer.

"What's the method?"

"The married men all wipe their feet on the mat; the single men don't."

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THE LAST HOPE.

A young lady had a train to catch, and chartered a cab, which, unfortunately, was drawn by a very wretched-looking horse. Having told cabby that she had to reach the station in twenty minutes, the vehicle dashed away at five miles an hour.

They had barely got fifty yards, however, before the lady put her head out of the window and requested the driver to whip the horse, as she would otherwise miss the train. He accordingly did so.

A little further on she asked him to administer the whip once more, as the cab was only just moving. Cabby again complied. Soon after she said:

"Can't you hit him on the head so as to wake *him* up a bit?"

Looking at the young lady, the cabby exclaimed: "Well, miss, I've hit the animal all over his bloomin' body except his left ear, and I'm saving that for the last hill."

THE REVISED VERSION.

"Hullo, is that you, dear?" called the fond husband into the telephone.

"Yes," came the answer over the wire.

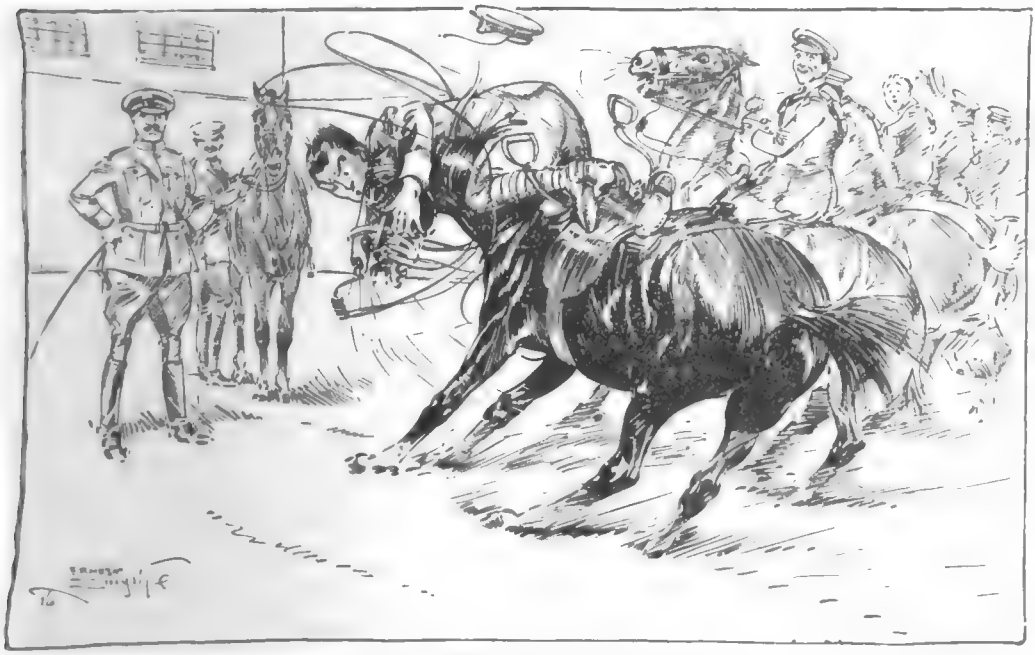
"I'm bringing Green home to dinner to-night. We'll be along in about half-an-hour."

"Oh, goodness!" gasped his invisible wife "How many times have I told you not to ask your friends here without giving me notice? If he must come, he'll just get some cold lamb and potatoes fried up, and not another bite. I'm not going to stand over a gas-stove at this time of night for Green or anyone else. If he doesn't like it, he can lump it. And I don't like Mr. Green anyway!"

"All right, dear. We'll be along soon."

"What did your wife say?" asked Green, as the other hung up the receiver.

"Oh, she's as pleased as anything about it! Wanted to know why you hadn't been before. Come on!"



AFTER THE ORDER "HALT!"

"Now then, Private Jones, when you've done kissing that horse, we'll proceed!"

NOTHING DOING.

Anything he could get free he got free. Such an adept at the game was he that he would often apply for free samples from twelve different addresses at once under twelve different names and in twelve different handwritings and live on the product for a week. And now his son was down with a sore throat, and the problem was how to get him well for nothing.

For an hour he hung about outside his doctor's house, and then pretended to be passing accidentally as the medico came out.

"Hallo, doctor!" he exclaimed ingenuously, and then rambled into the by-ways of conversation on our great offensive in France, also on the unsettled weather. At last he reached his point.

"By the way," he remarked casually, "what would you give for a sore throat?"

The M.D. looked him up and down. "Nothing!" replied he at length. "I don't want a sore throat!"

REGRETS.

Her pretty face went white, then red,
Her eyes were full of woe,
"Oh! though I've longed for you," she said,
"I feel that you must go."

"You yielded, 'twas a sad mistake,
My heart is wrung with pain;
Be firm, if only for my sake,
Be firm, I beg again."

But I'll explain, don't be afraid,
The reason for this scene:
She'd made a jelly, luckless maid,
Without the gelatine!

Leslie Mary Oyler.

* * * * *

THE FINAL.

SNIPER: "I've knocked the spike orf of 'is bloomin' 'elmet—'e's took the top orf o' my bloomin' ear—and it's my shot next!"

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A QUESTION OF BRASS.

By Margaret Cente.

"Scanty goods have I to give,
Scanty skill to woo;
But I have a will to work,
And a heart for you."

"Talking of presents," began Joy.

"We weren't!" interrupted the man at the door.

"No? Then let's start at once," Joy said, beaming at his puzzled face.

"Don't hedge, please," he protested. Then he closed the door and marched towards her with a fiercely determined air. About a yard from the peculiarly fascinating figure confronting him he pulled up with a jerk.

Some girls are deadlier than the deadliest gun in existence. Before the withering fire of the particular pair of eyes possessed by Joy—also her tantalising, laughing lips—this man crumpled up, conscious only of a wild desire to kiss her, and go on kissing her, till the end of everything.

"Are you—have you—I mean, did you have a good journey?" inquired Joy airily, as though he'd come post-haste from Tooting instead of Scotland.

He glared at her, or tried to, and brushed the foolish question aside as he muttered:

"Train over an hour late!"

"*Was* it?" she sympathised so innocently. "Oh, I *am* sorry!" Just as though she had not counted every minute of that lost hour, till it seemed an interminable century. "Have you had tea? Do let me order some——"

Catching her wrist, he led her to a chair near the crackling logs, and thrust her gently but firmly into its leathery clutches. Then he sat down near her.

"Don't suggest food or drink, please," he directed. "And stick to the point if you can. I've come a long way, and I'm rather——"

"Oh, I'm sorry you made a martyr of yourself," she murmured, "and, of course, I know you're in a hurry to get back."

His lazy dark eyes flashed fire.

"I didn't say so," he remarked with deadly calm. "My remark was to have been to the effect that I'm rather anxious. I've been rather anxious ever since I flung some things into a bag and came south. So let us stick to the point, if you don't mind."

You see, he knew his Joy.

She raised her eyebrows and looked dignified.

"Certainly," said she, "if you'll tell me what the point is."

He gasped. "Well, of all the cool——! Look here, did you send me this wire?"

Hauling a crumpled piece of paper into sight, he waved it at her.

"A wire?" mused Joy.

"Yes. This is what it says: 'Something serious has happened. Come at once. Joy.' *Did* you send it?"

"Do you know so many people called Joy, then?" she flung at him.

For just a second his eyes held hers in a steady gaze.

"None—that I would travel from Scotland to see—to help, if help is possible," was his quiet answer.

Her face softened into an adorable smile. "Robin!" she whispered, "you really *are* a dear. Yes, I sent the wire."

"And I'm here," he finished. "Now, what is it, please?"

Joy curled her legs up on the leather chair, pushed a stray curl off her forehead, uncurled her legs, and inquired: "Have you had a good time up North?"

One large fist struck his open palm with a resounding thump.

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Stretching out her hand, she picked up an old brass tinder-box from a small table. "This is it—my first wedding present," she finished dreamily. [Page 80, col. 1.]

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"Answer my question, please! Tell me why you sent for me."

She smoothed her cheek with a reflective finger.

"I have told you. At least, I began to tell you, and you shut me up. When I said 'talking of presents' I was trying to break it to you."

"What have presents to do with it?"

"Not much, except just to lead up gently to the real thing."

"Well?"

She held tightly to the arms of her chair.

"Robin—I've sent for you, all this way, after—after parting from you for ever, to tell you I've—I've had a wedding present!"

Six feet of staggered manhood shot to its feet. Two horrified dark eyes glared fixedly at Joy, and a strange voice said: "What did you say?"

"A wedding present," she repeated. "Here it is."

Stretching out her hand, she picked up an old brass tinder-box from a small table.

"This is it—my first wedding present," she finished dreamily.

Anger, hatred, and misery battled against the love in his eyes—and love won. But he was too sore, too sad to take it quietly.

"It may be an excellent joke"—he took the tinder-box from her roughly—"but I'm afraid my sense of humour doesn't quite meet the case. . . . You're a bit of an enigma, Joy. I suppose every woman has more than a touch of the savage in her. Well, if it gives you any pleasure to see a man suffer, I hope you're happy now."

Her soft eyes grew misty and her fingers twisted a handkerchief into a rag. "It doesn't give me the slightest pleasure to—to see you suffer, Robin. . . . I didn't know it would hurt you."

"Hurt!" His hands gripped her restless fingers. Like a pistol shot, his mirthless laugh rang out. "Oh, no—not hurt—only the way it hurts if you rub salt into an open wound."

"Robin!"

"Don't pretend you are surprised—I shan't believe you," he said, so bitterly that she shrank away from him. "Just a fortnight ago, Joy, I asked you to marry me, and you said 'No.' I—I think that was the blackest day in my whole life. I've adored you for years, and you knew it. Yet you sent me away. You said, in this very room, 'Please go; I never want to see or hear of you again.' Those words have burnt themselves into my brain. . . . So I obeyed; I went away—to Scotland, and then I was going further still—anywhere out of Europe, so that you might never see or hear of me any more."

"You're hurting me," breathed the girl in the deep chair, and he drew his hands from her wrists, realising that his grip had been of iron.

"I want to hurt you; you've made me mad—mad with love, and pity, and misery. For two weeks I've been trying to forget you—trying, before Heaven, to wipe every memory of you out of my heart—because you wished it. And I've failed. I was just about at the end of everything when your wire came. It terrified me, but it made me glad, in an awful, frightened sort of way. I thought—oh, I don't know what I thought, except that perhaps you wanted me, after all. And now, when I see you at last, you treat me like a casual stranger, and tell me you have sent for me to show me your—your first wedding present!"

He swung round, fighting for self-control. His head was throbbing; a red mist swam before his eyes, and he could see nothing but that stupid brass tinder-box—Joy's wedding present.

"It does seem a foolish thing to bring you all this way just to show you a brass box," said Joy in a curious, flat voice. "But though I'm selfish and thoughtless—yes, I am!—I wouldn't do a thing like that. There's something else, Robin."

Again he laughed, and she shuddered at the sound.

"Something else? Of course—of course! How silly of me. My congratulations—my heartiest congratulations to you and—the lucky man who——"

He wanted to say a lot more, but his voice gave out. So he made a dive for the window and stood looking into the street with eyes that saw nothing.

"You're quite wrong," said Joy, suddenly roused to life and action. She picked up the brass box and held it tight, as though it gave her confidence. "I don't want any congratulations, and there isn't any lucky man."

"A girl who is engaged to be married generally expects congratulations," came in muffled tones from the window. "And any man who marries you deserves to be called lucky—so please don't be sarcastic."

"I'm not!" cried Joy, thumping the little brass box. "I'm much too unhappy to be sarcastic."

"Really? I should think you ought to be very happy——"

"Who's sarcastic now? Can't you let me explain, Robin? and then you'll see how awful it is. . . . I've got a wedding present, but I'm not engaged to be married,

["A QUESTION OF BRASS" continued overleaf.]

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and I never shall be, unless—Robin! Mind the curtains——"

"Not engaged? *Not* engaged!"

Something seemed to seize his throat, and he struggled for breath like a drowning man.

Joy shook her head.

"And this—this awful thing is here," she tapped the little brass box, "and everybody thinks I'm engaged, and I'm simply too miserable for words!"

She was going to hide her face in her hands, but he crossed the room like a whirlwind, seized the cold, shaking fingers and gripped them tight.

"Dear," said Robin, "I don't understand; it's all very muddling and confused, but I feel like a man who has stepped out of a cellar into a blaze of sunshine. Do you think—er—could you explain?"

Joy's head nodded and she winked away her tears.

"That's what I want to do, only you were so excited and wouldn't listen, and—please, Robin, may I get my hanky?"

He released her hands and she dabbed her eyes with the rag-like apology for a handkerchief while he murmured:

"A wedding-present, but you're not engaged! Upon my soul, it's confoundedly muddling. Hurry up, Joy! I shall go crazy if you keep me in suspense much longer."

She smiled a watery smile.

"Though you've known me and my family a long time Robin, you don't really know much about us, do you?" she said. "About our affairs, I mean—money, and horrid things like that."

"I thought you were——"

"Quite rich. I know. Most people do, because that's what mother wants them to think, but we aren't really. It's an awful struggle to keep things up, and I found out, not long ago, that I could help—because I'm the eldest—by marrying a rich man."

His strong fingers closed over her hand caressingly.

"There was a man," she said softly, "a man I loved, but he wasn't very rich. If I married him it wouldn't help the others, and something had to be done for them. . . . There was another man, and he was very, very rich, but I—I didn't love him. He came here very often, and seemed to like us all. One day my mother made me see how serious things were—just over two weeks ago. She told me this rich man would ask me to be his wife, and when he did I must say 'Yes,' for the sake of the others."

There was a short silence, and though he tried to see her eyes they were hidden.

"I'm beginning to understand," he said. "So when the—the poor man asked you to marry him, you sent him away, because it would be better for them if you married somebody else?"

Joy said yes, that was the case. And it had made her so miserable, but——

"It had to be done, Robin. And after you'd gone the awful things began to happen. Mother wanted to hurry it along, I suppose—so one night at dinner she practically hinted that I was already engaged, but that it was a secret yet, and would not be publicly announced for a few days. Oh, Robin, I nearly died of shame!"

"Poor child—poor child! Why didn't you tell them it wasn't true?"

"How could I—and give away my own mother? Besides, I knew that I had to make it true as soon as the chance came along. But, Robin—this is the worst part of it—old Mrs. Genshon was there when mother talked like that, and she's rather deaf, you know. She caught part of it, but not all, and went away convinced that I was already in the 'marriage-has-been-arranged' condition."

"Great Scott! How ghastly!"

"Wasn't it? And a few days later—this arrived!" She thrust the little brass box under his straight nose. "This, with a card inscribed: 'All good wishes to you and your future husband, from Mr. and Mrs. Genshon.' Wasn't that too appalling for words?"

"It was!" agreed Robin. "A brass box—there seems to have been a good deal of brass in the story, one way and another. What did you do?"

Joy laughed shakily. "I hid the box, and went about praying that she wouldn't tell too many people."

"But where was the man all the time—the man with lots of money? Didn't he come into it at all?"

She met his puzzled stare for a second, then looked away at the little brass box.

"He did!" confessed Joy. "He came into it in a very unexpected, rather wonderful way. Two days ago he asked my sister Blanche to marry him—and Blanche said 'Yes.' She—she likes him, you see."

Robin began to stride up and down the room.

"This is tragic, indeed," he said with rather unnecessary emphasis. "Wasn't it a fearful blow to you?"

"Oh—awful!" smiled Joy. "Robin, how can you? It was the happiest, loveliest thing that ever happened. It—it let me out, you see. . . . Then I went upstairs nearly shouting with glee, and on my dressing-table beheld—*this!*" She brandished

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the little brass box. "My wedding present—and there was I, landed—without a husband."

He was going to speak, but she rushed on. "I thought I'd return it, and then I hadn't the courage. So there seemed only one thing to do. I—I wired to you."

"Why?" demanded Robin, trying to suppress a twinkle in his eyes.

"Because—because it's an awful thing to have a wedding present and no husband," murmured Joy, adorably pink. "Oh, Robin, can't you help me out? There seemed only one thing to do. I had to make the wedding present true—and to do that I had to get a husband!"

"A—rich—husband?" demanded the wretch.

Her eyes were very bright, very happy, and she smiled at him.

"Not now," she said. "Blanche has saved me from that. If you don't mind—I'd rather have a husband I—I love."

"*Mind?*" shouted Robin, and caught her in his arms, kissing her eyes and hair and lips over and over again.

"Mind?" he repeated some time later. "Why, Joy—what's this?"

She had put the little brass box into his hands.

"Our first wedding present," she replied rather curiously. "Open it."

He fumbled with the lid, forced it back, and inside the box beheld a small sheet of paper.

"Hullo—what's this?" inquired the happiest man in the kingdom. "A letter? No—a bill, by Jove! 'Miss Joy Tracey: to account rendered—one small brass tinder-box—15s. 6d.' . . . *What?* 'One small brass tinder-box.' Joy! What does it mean?"

Joy didn't know whether to laugh or cry, so she hid her blushing face against his coat.

"Only that I couldn't lose you, that I didn't know how to tell you all about things, and that Mrs. Genshon never sent me a wedding present at all! . . *I bought it*—just to bring you back again! . . . . I thought you'd be sorry for me in such a fix. Brass makes a lot of difference sometimes, doesn't it?" This in a tiny whisper.

Robin grinned. "It does! So it's not a wedding present at all?" he inquired.

"No," said Joy. "Are you very angry? . . . . But it can be, if you like—oh, I know! I'll give it to you for Christmas!"

TO A PERSIAN PUSS CAT.

Oh, little cat that lappest up
  Thy milk from day to day,
As gentles quaff the flowing cup—
  (Far wiser thou than they!)
What in your noddle fur-becrowned
  The thoughts that flutter by?
Do you admire the world so round,
  Or is it all my eye?

Perhaps you dream of three blind mice
  That farmer's wife-ward ran,
Of all the roses and the spice
  You knew in Ispahan.
I cannot gauge the depths that drown
  Your eyes so calm and cool;
Perhaps you think I'm just a clown,
  And, cat, you are no fool.

François.

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The Force of Nature.

By Margaret Pedler.

"A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,
And sweet as English air could make her, she."

I.

"Her ladyship is dining out to-night."

The face of Timothy, Lord Denver, fell perceptibly as this piece of news was vouchsafed him by an impeccable-looking housemaid. Her ladyship was always out nowadays, it seemed to him. He stared at the table, elaborately laid for a solitary diner. Then he stared at the housemaid.

"And you?" he said. "Why are you here? Where are the men?"

"It was Digby's night out, my lord"—Digby was the butler—"and after he had gone a wire came for Phipps"—Phipps was the footman—"asking him to go home at once, as his mother had been suddenly taken ill. So her ladyship gave him permission to do so."

"Humph!" Timothy grunted, and seated himself at the table.

The pretty young housemaid who was taking the place of the absent menservants waited dexterously, her face every whit as inhumanly cold and impassive as Digby's own. She knew quite well what was expected of her.

Meanwhile, Timothy applied himself sulkily to his lonely dinner, and meditated on the rather stately ceremonial of his existence. The Denvers were old-fashioned people; they had always been great sticklers for etiquette and formality, and the mother of the present holder of the title was particularly rigid and unbending in this respect. And—so true is it that habit becomes second nature—Timothy had never found it irk him.

But he remembered very clearly, when Allegra Durrant had first come into his life, how attractive he had found her unconventionality and spontaneous high spirits. It was like a sun-warmed breeze blowing through a musty museum of antiquities.

"Lack of ordinary good manners," the Dowager Lady Denver had characterised it. But then it had been a very bitter blow to the latter when Timothy had fallen hopelessly in love with Allegra Durrant, the boot-polish man's daughter, and only the fact that the boot-polish was of such a popular kind, and the source of such vastly desirable millions, had reconciled her to the marriage.

For, at that particular period, an addition to the family revenue had been sorely needed, since it was discovered after the death of Timothy's father that the estates were very heavily encumbered. And the capacity of the boot-polish to clear off the mortgages, and re-establish the house of Denver upon a firm foundation, had induced Lady Denver to overlook the matter of Allegra's plebeian origin until the marriage, with all its concomitant advantages, had become an accomplished fact.

Afterwards, her dowager ladyship rarely lost an opportunity of impressing upon Allegra the inherent difference in quality between the blue Denver blood and the commoner red fluid that ran in the veins of the Durrants. She also pointed out with frequency how very much Allegra's impulsive ways, her ready smiles and laughter, differed from that repose which marks the caste of Vere de Vere—and Denver.

For a long time Allegra resisted these attacks buoyantly. Then, quite suddenly, as though wearying of the incessant strife, she capitulated, and even her mother-in-law could no longer complain of her lack of staidness and formality. But to Timothy, who had found his young bride's unconventionality curiously refreshing after two and forty years of forms and ceremonies, it was as though the sun had gone suddenly behind a cloud. The ironclad reserve of years had debarred him from uttering a single protest, however, and gradually a wall of conventional politeness had arisen between husband and wife, and they had drifted slowly apart.

Not that Allegra ever failed in her duties.

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She carefully consulted Timothy's wishes concerning everything pertaining to the entertainment of their guests, both in town and at their country home, and, having ascertained what they were, carried them out as scrupulously as though they had been a religious observance.

Only once had she rebelled openly against the formality of her life. It was on an occasion when the Dowager had rebuked her for appearing at dinner with a minute black kitten tucked under her arm, which she subsequently fed with cream poured into a Minton plate, whilst allowing its small person standing-room on the spotless damask of the tablecloth.

This had been a heinous offence, and her mother-in-law had assured her that the servants would have no further respect for her if she insisted upon comporting herself like a young woman living in the suburbs.

"I wish I *did* live in the suburbs!" Allegra had retorted with spirit. "At least, the people there are human, and have a little fun sometimes."

To-night, when Timothy had been greeted with the formal message that her ladyship was dining out, was typical of many other nights. Whenever society made no claims upon them, so that a *tête-à-tête* dinner loomed in prospect for husband and wife, Allegra skilfully evaded it by alleging some little private engagement of her own.

Hence, a long, dull evening stretched unattractively in front of Timothy. He felt no desire to go to his club, and still less to sit and brood alone at home, and the happy-go-lucky evenings of his youthful days, when he had been chucked out of theatres and so forth, in company with other young bloods of a like age and inclination, offered no allurement to his forty odd years.

His thoughts turned cursorily towards Digby. He, too, must be well over forty years of age, yet he apparently continued to find enjoyment in his free evenings. Vaguely, Timothy wondered how he did it.

By the time he had finished his walnuts and wine, the matter of Digby's "evening out" had become almost an obsession, and when the maid brought in his coffee he arrested her conversationally.

"So it's Digby's night out, is it?" he remarked.

The pretty housemaid looked rather surprised.

"Yes, my lord," she replied hesitatingly.

"Digby's as old as I am. Why does he want a night out? Does he enjoy it, do you think?"

"Why, yes, of course he enjoys it, my lord. You see, it's so different from what he's obliged to do on other days."

"Different? How different? Digby's got beyond the stage of 'keeping company,' I I suppose?" with a brief smile.

The young housemaid laughed outright. There was something spontaneous and rippling and girlish about her laughter that reminded Timothy of Allegra—Allegra as she used to be when he first married her, and before his mother had frozen her into that well-bred assumption of indifference.

"Oh, Digby isn't keeping company, my lord," replied the housemaid. "It isn't that. But, if you understand, we all have to behave in a certain way in service, while on our 'night out' we can be just ourselves."

There was a clarifying simplicity about the explanation, and Timothy realised that this indifferently educated young housemaid had stumbled upon a fundamental truth. Substitute "in society" for the words "in service," and her observation would apply with equal force to another grade of human beings altogether—his own grade. Why shouldn't they—why shouldn't *he* have a night out sometimes, an "evening off" from the accepted shibboleths of his kind?

"I think I understand," he said at last with gentle gravity, adding suddenly: "It's—it's quite a good idea."

He sipped his coffee reflectively, while an astonished and mystified housemaid dutifully sought the lower regions of the basement once again.

Meanwhile, Timothy, in the grip of a new and surprisingly insistent desire, pondered whither he could possibly go in order to "be himself" for a few hours. It would never do to take his way to any of the haunts of his social *confrères;* that would be to spoil his plan at its very inception.

"The Black Bat!"

The words seemed to say themselves somewhere inside his brain.

"The Black Bat!"

What was it? Where had he heard of it? And then, all at once, he remembered. Some joyous young lad—he couldn't remember at the moment who it was—had prattled to him about it.

"Jolliest night-club I've ever sampled—rather mixed, y'know—a bit on the Bohemian side. But rattling good fun for all that—top-hole dancing, by Jove!"

Very deliberately Timothy rang the bell and told the pretty young housemaid to call a taxi.

II.

It was a gala night at the "Black Bat,' commemorating the first anniversary of its existence as a night-club, and the occasion

["THE FORCE OF NATURE" continued overleaf.]

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was being celebrated in fancy dress. The Red Romany Band was playing a waltz with that seductive abandon which had made it more or less famous, and the gaily-dressed couples were dancing in and out amongst the little tables that sprinkled the room.

Presently, a rag-time ousted the waltz, and in a few moments the place became pandemonium. Perhaps the music held something heady in its odd, clipped rhythm, or perhaps the constant popping of corks accounted for the increase of enthusiasm. Whatever it was, the fun rose fast and furious. Men's and women's voices, instinctively attuned to an appropriate nasal twang, took up the refrain of the rag; syrens and little tin trumpets added to the joyous din, while long streamers of gay-coloured paper ribbon—pink and blue and green and scarlet—were flung across the room in mimic battle.

Timothy, feeling rather helpless and adrift, leant against a wall and watched the crowd stream past him. In his correct evening kit, with his thin, patrician face, his greying hair, and his quite unconscious little air of aloofness, he certainly looked out of place.

Perhaps this idea had presented itself to one of the merrymakers, together with a genial desire to make the grave-looking guest feel more at home, for suddenly a coil of pink ribbon sprang towards him, festooning itself about his neck and shoulders, and a young face laughed at him from beneath a cloud of berry-wreathed hair.

"Aren't you going to dance, Mr. Black-and-White?" called a merry voice. "Look! There's a partner waiting for you, dressed to fill the bill!" And a white arm gestured towards a table close at hand.

A roar of laughter greeted this sally, followed by a shower of paper confetti and more pink ribbon entanglements, and then the wave of dancers surged by, leaving Timothy high and dry, staring in the direction indicated by the berry-wreathed lady's kindly hand.

Yes, there certainly was a partner dressed to fill the bill! She was sitting alone at one of the little tables, her head leaning on her hand, dressed in black that sheathed her almost to the knee, and from below which flowed out a foam of white. The frock was cut rather on the lines of a Spanish dancer's, and the black lace mantilla which concealed the hair completed the picture. A fringed mask hid the upper part of her face, and a black patch just below the left-hand corner of the mouth accentuated the piquancy of the little pointed chin.

Timothy covered the few yards that intervened between him and the black-and-white lady.

"Did you hear what they said?" he asked abruptly.

The lips below the mask curved into a smile.

"Yes." The single syllable drifted from between them as softly as a snowflake.

"Then—then"—Timothy eyed the vacant chair at the little table suggestively—"may I sit here and talk to you?"

"But yes, *monsieur*."

She was French, then! Timothy thought the curious little foreign intonation of her words delightful.

He sat down in response to the invitation of a small, ringless hand.

"I'm afraid," he continued almost bashfully. "I don't dance."

"No?"—with a little shrug, as though to indicate that that was a matter of the smallest importance. "Then we will talk."

And they did—gliding easily and naturally from one topic to another, and exchanging ideas with an utter frankness and lack of self-consciousness born of the untrammelled circumstances of their meeting. In some indefinable way, the mere fact that the woman was masked freed Timothy from the shy reserve that usually kept his thoughts penned like birds behind the bars of a cage.

Presently the "Black Mask" cast a glance at the stream of dancers as they swept past the table. Her lips smiled.

"I wonder," she said interrogatively, "why *monsieur* has sought the 'Black Bat'? It is—hardly his affair."

Timothy experienced a sudden, overwhelming impulse to confide in her.

"I'll tell you. I heard—I was told by a fellow that this was an awfully jolly, Bohemian sort of place, and I came here—to be myself."

"To be yourself?" she said curiously.

"Yes." Timothy continued eagerly. "You see, I live amongst people who always do this, that, and the other because it's the 'right thing.' They're very rich people, and successful people, and well-known people, and they think that because of all these things they're free to do just as they like. But they aren't in the least, really. They're the most utterly slavish crowd imaginable—bound down by fashion and custom and convention so that their very souls aren't their own. And I—I got sick of it—sick of it!" he concluded violently.

The "Black Mask" nodded.

"I understand," she said. "I, also, I live with people—oh, of the most respectable! And I, too, was sick of it. That's why I come here," she added simply.

"You come often?"

"As often as I can. You see, I can only

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come when no one suspects. It would not do to be caught. It would be—what is it you say?—shocking! Oh, but *très* shocking!" She elevated a pair of expressive shoulders and smiled across at him with the mischievous delight of a truant schoolboy.

"Then in future *I* shall come—as often as I can. May I, *mademoiselle?*"

"The 'Black Bat' is open to all. It is not for me to permit, or not permit, *monsieur* to come."

"Yes, it is," declared Timothy. "Tell me"—leaning forward a little—"would you be pleased if I came again?"

Timothy watched the tiny black patch at the corner of her mouth quiver responsively to a smile.

"Come and see!" she answered.

III.

At the next visit which Timothy paid to the "Black Bat" disappointment awaited him. She was not there, and he found the evening desperately long and boring. However, he comforted himself with the reflection that it was inevitable they should miss each other sometimes, since each of them was compelled to visit the night-club under the rose, so to speak.

On the third occasion he arrived rather late, and discovered his lady of the mask tangoing with a big, bearded foreigner, who danced magnificently.

Timothy seated himself rather disconsolately at the little table—"our table," as he mentally called it—wishing ardently that he had learnt how to tango and fox-trot. Allegra had often wanted to teach him these things, but the rigid Denver code of propriety had frowned forbiddingly upon such innovations.

The "Black Mask" and her partner were evidently enjoying themselves thoroughly, and it was with obvious reluctance that the big foreigner at last set her free to join Timothy at his little table.

"Who's that brute you were dancing with, just now?" demanded Timothy, when they had exchanged greetings.

"He is—I have met him here several times before," she replied waveringly. "He dances divinely."

The lilt of her pretty, foreign accent only added to Timothy's ire.

"Very likely," he snapped back. "But you've no business to make acquaintance with Tom, Dick, and Harry in that promiscuous fashion."

She smiled.

"You did not think that when—when you spoke to me a few nights ago," she observed drily.

"Oh, that! That was the exception which proves the rule," retorted Timothy, unabashed.

The "Black Mask" looked about her in a detached manner, her foot tapping lightly on the floor to the swing of the music.

"If—if *monsieur* were to offer me one little cigarette?" she said tentatively, ignoring his last remark.

Timothy sprang up, apologising for his negligence, and plunged his hand hastily into his pocket for his cigarette-case. As he drew it out and tendered it her eyes fastened on something small and round, like a locket, that dangled from it, caught by a black ribbon to the hinge of the case.

"But—what is that?" she asked, pointing.

Timothy looked down, blushed scarlet, and tried to disentangle the ribbon.

"Confound the thing!" he muttered, bungling horribly with nervous fingers.

"But what is it?" she persisted. "See, let me do it! The ribbon of the locket has got shut into the hinge of your cigarette-case, and *monsieur* is all thumbs."

Together they succeeded at last in freeing the ribbon, and the little, flat locket fell with a clatter to the table and snapped open, revealing a miniature of a charming, girlish face with gay blue eyes and a mutinous mouth, framed in sunny brown hair.

"Oh, la, la!" The "Black Mask" pointed a small, mocking finger at the pictured face. "So *monsieur* carries with him his lady-love's portrait!"

"That is my wife," said Timothy icily, his face suddenly very white.

The mockery dropped from her like a garment. She picked up the miniature and regarded it thoughtfully.

"The wife of *monsieur?* She is very pretty, is she not? And so young!"

Timothy sat down rather heavily.

"Yes," he said slowly. "That's just it. She's so young. And we—I and my mother—are old, and dry, and hide-bound by convention."

The "Black Mask" laid the miniature down on the table very gently.

"So that *monsieur* does not—does not love his young wife?"

"*Love her?*" Timothy's voice shook uncontrollably. "I worship her! But I'm too old for her. She's—she's like a flower, a spring flower, tied to a dried-up stick."

At this moment the big foreigner with whom the girl had been tangoing approached her, and, stooping, murmured something about the dance that was just commencing.

She gestured a negative.

"But no, *monsieur*, it is impossible."

The man protested volubly, but she remained firm.

["THE FORCE OF NATURE" continued overleaf.]

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But the foreigner was not to be shaken off so easily. Catching her roughly by the arm, he exclaimed angrily:

"Come! I have your promise, *mademoiselle*."

Swiftly she released herself.

"*Monsieur*," she said indignantly, "you are dismissed."

"Little cheat!" he exclaimed. "You have broken your compact. But, see! I am magnanimous. I will take a kiss as forfeit, and "—with an ironical bow—"leave you to *monsieur's* society." With a conquering smile he stooped towards her.

Quite suddenly, it seemed to Timothy, all the blood in his body rushed to his head. Hitherto he had stood by quietly, a silent spectator of the little scene, but now, with a leaping thrill in his veins, his right arm shot out and caught the big man squarely on the jaw, sending him floundering down on his back.

For a brief moment Timothy experienced an exquisite, unreasoning joy. It was years since he had knocked a man down, and he thrilled with the sheer physical triumph of it!

But the next instant the foreigner was on his feet again, his eyes blazing, fists clenched.

"You! Who are you?" he roared. "What right have *you* to interfere?"

Something—a flash of black and white—flung itself between the two men.

"Every right!" cried a woman's voice passionately. "Every right! He is my husband!"

Timothy stared incredulously.

"*You! Allegra!*" he stammered.

She snatched off her mask and stood before him, palpitatingly alive and vivid.

"Yes—I!" With a sweeping gesture she wiped the astonished foreigner off the map. "Now go, please—go at once!"

The soft, provocative French accent had suddenly given place to good, ringing English, and Timothy realised that it had been merely assumed for tactical reasons, since nothing is so readily identified as intonation.

As the discomfited man slunk away, Allegra sank into a chair a little breathlessly.

"I suppose," she said slowly, "I suppose you're horribly shocked?"

Timothy looked at her with questioning eyes.

"Why did you come here?" he asked quietly.

"I came—like you, Timothy—to be myself." She gave an odd little laugh that was half a sob. Then she burst out passionately: "I couldn't bear it any longer—the dreadful daily grind of it all! Your mother, with her eternal parrot cry, the 'proper thing to do'; the servants—like so many blocks of wood instead of decent human beings—the whole deadening convention of it! I couldn't bear it, Timothy. Oh! I'm common, I suppose—at least, your mother says I am—just a common human being, and I want to live like one, and laugh when I like, and cry when I like, and not go through life 'considering my position'! And—and," her voice broke suddenly, "I never knew you cared, Timothy. I—I thought you only married me because—because of the boot-polish!"

"Never knew I cared!" said Timothy in low tones of wonder. "Why, Allegra, I've loved you from the very first moment I saw you, and when you promised to marry me I couldn't imagine what I'd done that God should be so good to me." Then, after a pause, "What made you think I didn't care?" he asked.

Allegra fumbled in her bodice for a moment; then she laid a letter on the table—a letter in the Dowager Lady Denver's thin, angular handwriting.

"That!" she said quietly. "I found it one day on the floor, and I've carried it with me ever since."

Timothy smoothed out the crumpled letter and read:

> Of course, my dear Timothy, I do not care for Allegra. She is, unfortunately, of quite common origin. But, still, she is very presentable, as far as appearances go, and I am glad that you have been able to bring yourself to marry her, as the money will be useful.

Timothy tore up the letter into the tiniest fragments and flung them from him broadcast, so that they were soon lost amid the paper and confetti which strewed the floor.

"I remember that letter," he said in a low voice of concentrated anger. "I was furious about it. I stuffed it into the pocket of the coat I was wearing, meaning to burn it, and then, afterwards, I couldn't find it. It must have fallen out of the pocket." He stretched out his hand across the table. "Allegra, the servants aren't really blocks of wood. They're as human as we are. It's just because old Digby's such a human kind of chap that I'm here to-night. I'll tell you all about it some day. And, meanwhile, let's go on 'being ourselves.' Shall we?"

Allegra nodded, and her hand slipped into his—and stayed there. The Dowager Lady Denver would probably have been shocked at such an exhibition of feeling had she witnessed it. That kind of thing is so bourgeois.

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MR. EDITOR —HIS PAGE.

Things to Rejoice Your Hearts.

A "ROYAL" CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

EVERY year at this time I trumpet forth to you the news that Christmas is coming, and with it a Christmas Number, the like of which has not been seen on any bookstall before. This year it would take a fanfare of trumpets to do justice to the splendour that is the December ROYAL. It will be a shilling, true, but for that modest sum will be not only specially enlarged, but contain thirty-two pages printed in two colours, including a charming article by that delightful young actress, Miss Winifred Barnes, illustrated with new and very Christmassy pictures of herself.

Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Baden-Powell contributes a stirring article on the necessity for due preparation if we are to hold our own in the industrial war that is before us. There is a vivid sketch entitled "A Naval Christmas," by "Taffrail" (the author of "Carry On!", one of the most popular war books of the year), and the first article of a new series by the gifted author of "The Letters of a Flapper." The hero is a young subaltern, gay, inconsequent, and utterly delightful. "Jottings of a Subaltern" commence in the Christmas Number; be sure and make the acquaintance of this priceless youth.

The fiction includes stories by such favourites as William Le Queux, Owen Oliver, Jessie Pope, and Booth Tarkington. I commend them to you, together with all the other good things we have prepared, and if you like them, we shall not have toiled in vain.

BOOKS FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF.

If you read one good story by a certain author, you yearn for more. Consequently, when you have enjoyed "A Naval Christmas," by "Taffrail"—which, as I told you, is one of the plums in the ROYAL Christmas pudding—you will rejoice to know that for a modest shilling you can obtain his latest book, entitled "Stand By!" As a writer of naval sketches "Taffrail" has few equals. He paints the life on board our warships with a breezy, intimate touch; his characters live; from Captain to A.B. you long to know them personally, and, failing that, find it a delight to read about them.

Lovers of the supernatural will find joy to their hearts in "Uncanny Tales," a selection of short stories which have appeared from time to time in the NOVEL MAGAZINE. These are not ordinary ghost stories, but stories in which the uncanny element predominates. They grip you by their mystery, their force, and uncanniness. The book is published at one shilling, and, I can assure you, is well worth it.

THE FRESH AIR FUND.

Miss Gladys Cooper's appeal on behalf of the children has brought a harvest of shillings, each one destined to give a glimpse of the country to some poor kiddie. They have come from trench and battleship, from cottage and mansion, and they have been very, very welcome.

I acknowledge, with many thanks from Miss Cooper and myself, the following amounts:

Amounts previously acknowledged: £383 6s. 7d.

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